

THE UK'S BIGGEST REGIONAL GAY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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# ZONE

NOVEMBER 2018 ISSUE 259



**Zoe Lyons**

*is back in Brum*

**Brum  
Pride**  
*survey  
results  
revealed!*

**Let's talk  
about SEX**

*Harry Clayton-Wright is here to educate*



**VIRAL  
SCENE  
GADGETS  
WHAT'S ON  
COMPETITIONS**



# CHECK-IN NOW FOR CHRISTMAS!



# Benidorm Live



Written by  
**Derren Litten**

**JAKE CANUSO JANINE DUVITSKI ADAM GILLEN SHERRIE HEWSON SHELLEY LONGWORTH TONY MAUDSLEY**



*"Strap in for one hell of a raucous ride!"*

Newcastle Chronicle

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a ghoulish time had by all...



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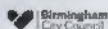
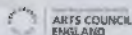
# THE NUTCRACKER

★★★★★ 'No other version comes close'  
THE SUNDAY TIMES



CHOREOGRAPHY **PETER WRIGHT, LEV IVANOV**  
& **VINCENT REDMON**  
PRODUCTION **PETER WRIGHT**  
MUSIC **PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**  
DESIGNS **JOHN F. MACFARLANE**  
LIGHTING **DAVID A. FINN**  
LIVE MUSIC **ROYAL BALLET SINFONIA**

#BRBNUTCRACKER  
[brb.org.uk/nutcracker](http://brb.org.uk/nutcracker)



Karla Doorbar as Clara, Edvaldo Sousa da Silva as The Prince. Photo © Balta Kotak



## Bianca Del Rio's biggest ever drag show to visit Birmingham



Following two sell-out UK tours, comedy queen Bianca Del Rio has announced that she'll be making a welcome return to these shores next autumn (from 1 to 24 September).

Bianca will travel the length and breadth of the country with It's Jester Joke - the biggest ever solo drag show in the UK - and will stop off at Arena Birmingham on Thursday 5 September. Her tour also includes Wembley Arena.

Commenting on the news, the former RuPaul's Drag Race champion said: 'I've been told I'll be the first drag queen to headline Wembley Arena! I'm excited... but also concerned that they aren't prepared for glitter and wig-hair clogs in the dressing room sinks! I'm incredibly grateful for the chance to perform at this beloved British venue before the retirement home comes knocking for me!'

# Have ya heard?



## Let's do the time warp again!

### The Rocky Horror Show returns to Brum

**The Rocky Horror Show is returning to Birmingham next spring.**

The new touring version of the hit musical will star Blue singer and Hollyoaks actor Duncan James, West End star Stephen Webb, Strictly Come Dancing champion Joanne Clifton and 11's Ben Adams.

Since it first opened at London's Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in June 1973, Richard O'Brien's cult classic has been performed in more than 30 countries and translated into 20-plus languages.

The new touring show visits the Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham from 13 to 25 May. Tickets are now on sale at [atgtickets.com](http://atgtickets.com)

## Virgin Atlantic announces first ever 'Pride flight' in 2019

A one-off 'Pride flight' will fly from London to New York ahead of next year's World Pride event, with Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt and Broadway star Tituss Burgess giving an in-flight performance.

The on-board entertainment will also include a DJ, drag queen bingo, a Judy Garland singalong and inter-seat speed dating.

The now-sold-out Virgin Atlantic flight, which will be staffed entirely by LGBT+ cabin crew and pilots, is designed to celebrate World Pride 2019. The event is being held in New York City for the first time ever, and will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising.





## BBC making new Bowie documentary

**The BBC is working on a new documentary about David Bowie.**

The 90-minute film will take a look at the bisexual singer's early years, before he came to national attention with hit single Space Oddity.

Bowie died from liver cancer in 2016 at the age of 69.

David Bowie: The First Five Years will air on BBC Two in 2019.



## Swiss government brings in new laws to provide protection for **LGBT** people

**The Swiss government has changed the country's law so that people who are homophobic or transphobic will face the same punishment as those who are racist.**

Switzerland's National Council voted by 118 to 80 votes to update the penal code. People who break the law by being homophobic or transphobic could now face up to three years in jail.

Posting on Twitter, Mathias Reynard, who proposed the law, wrote: "Victory! The National Council accepts my parliamentary initiative against homophobia and transphobia! A great success for human rights!"

Following the success, Reynard has confirmed that he plans to introduce marriage equality in Switzerland.



## Timothée Chalamet and Armie Hammer '1000% in' for Call Me By Your Name sequel

**Timothée Chalamet has revealed that he and Armie Hammer are up for a sequel to Academy Award-winning film Call Me By Your Name.**

The news comes after the movie's director, Luca Guadagnino, announced plans to revisit the characters in a second film, which is expected to take place five to six years in the future. The 2017 gay coming-of-age film was based on André Aciman's 2007 novel of the same name.

In a Time Magazine interview, Chalamet said: "I don't see any world where it doesn't happen. I think André is comfortable with a sequel being made. I know Luca really wants to, and I know Armie and I are 1000% in. I think it'll be a couple of years later. And I think that's cool - to take advantage of the boyhood style of storytelling. That isn't done all the time."





## HIV testing drop-ins return to Stoke-on-Trent venues

**Free fingerprick HIV testing drop-ins are this month being offered across Stoke-on-Trent, to coincide with HIV Testing Week (Saturday 17 - Friday 23 November).**

The Sexual Health Team from Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust is taking HIV testing out into the community at venues across the city.

The fast, free and confidential test requires a simple fingerprick and gives results in 20 minutes.

Throughout the year, rapid HIV fingerprick testing drop-ins are available on the last Wednesday and Thursday of every month at The Piccadilly Centre in Hanley.

A comprehensive sexual health screen - including HIV testing - is available at Cobridge Community Health Centre all year round. Rapid HIV tests are also available at the Cobridge sexual health clinic.



## Birmingham LGBT offer trans sexual health service

Midlands charity Birmingham LGBT is hoping to encourage more members of the local Trans community to make use of its dedicated sexual health service.

Clinic Trans is held at the Birmingham LGBT Centre on the last Friday of every month, between 4pm and 7pm. It offers a welcoming, non-judgmental and Trans-aware space in which to access general sexual health screening, vaccinations and contraception advice.

Estimates suggest that one percent of the population are gender-variant in some way. While the number of people

accessing support around general transgender issues is very high, those specifically accessing Clinic Trans is significantly lower, with only a handful of attendees per month.

Developed in collaboration with BLGBT and Umbrella Health, the clinic was designed by and for Trans people and will always have a Trans worker or volunteer available for anyone wishing to speak with a non-clinical member of staff. This is key for the Trans community, which has previously felt unable to access relevant help in main

# Have ya heard?

## Lady Gaga amongst stars to co-chair 'camp' Met Gala



**Vogue has announced that the title of next year's Met Gala event and Costume Institute fashion exhibit will be Camp: Notes On Fashion - with Lady Gaga amongst the fundraising gala's co-chairs.**

Show curator Andrew Bolton told the New York Times that the first half of the exhibit "will trace the origin of camp back to Versailles, through the Victorian era and the Stonewall riots, paying close attention to the use of camp as a language in the queer community".

The latter half of the exhibit will look at the influence of camp on the work of contemporary designers such as Prada.

"Sontag in her essay said not everything is camp," Bolton told the Times, "but since I've been working on the show, I've started to think it's everywhere, and that all fashion is, on some level, camp. It's gained such currency that it's become invisible, and part of my goal is to make it visible again."

Joining Lady Gaga as co-chairs for the annual Met Gala - which raises money for the Costume Institute - will be Anna Wintour, Alessandro Michele, Harry Styles and Serena Williams. The gala takes place on Monday 6 May.



stream sexual health services, where a perceived lack of understanding has left some users feeling under-served.

For more information, call 0121 643 0821 to speak to the Trans Sexual Health Outreach Worker, or visit <http://bit.ly/clinictrans>



**CONFIRMED!**



# Birmingham Pride to stay in the city's gay village!

**YOU DECIDED!**



**GAY VILLAGE  
& PARK**

**PARK  
ONLY**

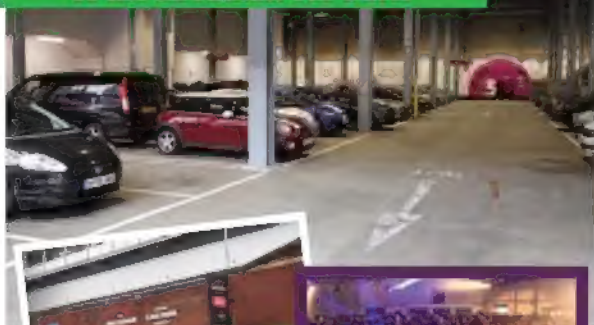
Midlands Zone can exclusively reveal that Birmingham Pride visitors have overwhelmingly decided that they want the event to remain in the city's gay village.

From more than 6,000 responses to a survey last month, a resounding 85% of people voted to keep the festival within the gay village area.

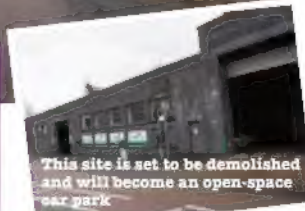




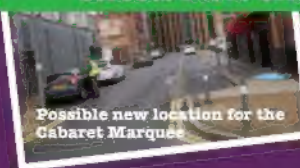
**This is where the Dance Arena could be staged - on the top floor of the Arcadian Car Park**



**The Main Stage could be located at the bottom of Hurst Street, or in the soon-to-be-demolished car park**



**The Cabaret Marquee and Funfair could make use of the gay village streets more effectively**



Once redeveloped, it's expected that part of the former wholesale market will feature a permanent entertainment space, which Pride organisers could consider using in the future.

In the meantime, the entertainment stages will now remain in the gay village

Last month, Birmingham Pride organisers asked the Midlands LGBT community to choose where they wanted the festival to be staged next year - and it's fair to say the community made their feelings abundantly clear!

There were three options on the table...

1. To relocate the entertainment stages to Calthorpe Park, which is situated about one mile away from the gay village, with the street party taking place in the gay village.
2. To remain in the gay village, and for the event organisers to look closely at how the available space could be used more effectively, given that the car parks on which the stages have usually been located will no longer be available for use, due to redevelopment.
3. To relocate the entire event to Calthorpe Park.

There were more than 6,000 survey responses from the Midlands LGBT community, with an overwhelming 85% of you voting for the event to remain in the gay village.

The other options were not at all popular, with just 4% wanting Pride to take place in the park alone, and 11% preferring the festival to be located in both the park and the gay village.

Birmingham Pride Festival Director **Lawrence Barton** commented: "The Pride team are working hard to deliver an even more diverse festival in 2019, one that will now remain in the gay

village."

He added: "Preparations are already being made to look at locating the Dance Arena on the top floor of the Arcadian Car Park, and the Main Stage down at the bottom of Hurst Street - either on the street or the adjacent car park, which is due to be flattened soon to provide an open-air car park. The Cabaret Stage could be located on the road in between Amusement 13 and the Nightingale Club."

*Birmingham Pride 2019 takes place over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend of Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 May.*





# Local Life Story

**Name:** Adrienne Frances

**Occupation:** Senior Arts Officer at Birmingham LGBT

**Place of birth:** Wolverhampton

**Star sign:** Libra

**Age:** 37

## About Adrienne

### Where did you grow up?

Wolverhampton as a child, Stafford for college, then over to Norwich for university. I then returned to Wolverhampton, where I've been ever since - albeit now with a hint of Cannock. My dad used to threaten me with elocution lessons when I was a kid, as he said I sounded 'too common'... he was from Liverpool, but had a background in theatre and performance. He made me learn lines to musicals with him, interspersed with saying over and over and over again 'the rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain'. I'd then go to school and be bullied for sounding 'too posh'.

### Single or attached?

Attached!

### What makes you happy?

Love, dogs, coffee,

intersectional feminism, arthouse cinema, walks in the woods in autumn, going on adventures, female singer-songwriters. My biggest pleasure is learning new things - especially 'making skills', like lampworking and spinning and weaving. I'm hoping to do a course in making neon next year.

### What makes you sad?

Love, dogs, bad coffee, unkindness, bad communication. Also, a lack of garden furniture and an inability to open the windows when it's hot.

### What makes you angry?

Misogyny. Most things come back to that.

### If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I AM GROWING A BEARD. I would like very much to no longer be growing a beard.

## Coming out

### When did you come out?

When I was 17, I was the LGBT rep of my students' union, but had still not felt the need to come out in any official capacity. At 18, I had an utterly unremarkable chat with my mum. I was hungover - at the time I worked in a local pub and had a crush on a co-worker, and other staff had threatened to tell my mum. So after a night out with everyone, I got up the next day, sloped downstairs to get some water and my mum was up. The conversation went something like this:

Me: 'Urggghh... I need to tell you something.'

Mum: 'Okaaaay...'

Me: 'I think I like girls.'

Mum: '...Okay.. aaaaanndddd...?'



Me: 'and that's it.'

Mum: 'Okay, so not boys?'

Me: 'No, them too.'

Mum: '...Okay... ..'

Me: '...I need sleep. Okay, bye.'

Unremarkable! By this time I'd already become heavily obsessed with Ani DiFranco, was a staunch feminist, was making artwork in college around FGM and domestic violence, wrote long love letters to many friends, and was fortunate enough to grow up in an environment that allowed me to absolutely be 100% myself.

### Have you had any experiences with the opposite sex?

Hahahahahaha!

## Quickfire

### Who's your favourite actor?

I have favourite films and favourite directors. I LOVE everything by Jeunet

& Caro, still have a soft spot for the work of Wes Anderson, will always love childhood classics like Labyrinth. I generally enjoy dark and twisty fantasy and arthouse films - anything that tells a new story, or an old story in

a new way.

### What's your favourite book?

Probably Wuthering Heights. Or The Phantom Tollbooth. Or anything by Haruki Murakami. And I get easily



## SHOUT Festival

**When did you join SHOUT and what is your role?**

I joined in May, after Birmingham LGBT managed to secure National Portfolio Organisation status for the project. This means that the Arts Council have made a commitment to supporting the festival for the next four years. As a result, my role of Senior Arts Officer was created, which has a focus on looking at strategic development for the festival, as well as developing new partnerships and strengthening networks.

My background is developing work for and with children and young people - and I still do that with my other hat on when not working on SHOUT stuff. Moving forwards, I'm hoping to develop a strand of work supporting young LGBT people through SHOUT, through professional development, mentoring, and co-curation opportunities. Watch this space!

**What are the challenges?**

It's a part-time role, yet we have huge ambitions for the festival, so navigating the tensions between that is tricky but doable! I'm juggling four calendars on my phone currently, and if I forget the password to any of them, then it will be a SAD DAY!

**What are the highlights?**

Working at Birmingham LGBT is a totally new experience for me. I've spent my entire career to date working within the arts and cultural sector, and whilst my role with SHOUT continues that, it's set in a completely different and amazing setting. I feel honoured to get to meet and work with so many amazing people, and anchor the work of the festival within the amazing

work of the centre. It's unlike anywhere else I've ever worked, and I love it!

**How does SHOUT Festival help the local LGBT community?**

SHOUT platforms work that will intrigue and excite LGBT audiences, and work that explores and shares LGBT experiences with all audiences. As part of the festival this year, we've included gender positivity and inclusion workshops, led by Milk Presents, which are designed to increase awareness and inclusivity of transgender, non binary and queer people in Birmingham venues. We also have an artist development programme where each year we will be supporting new and emerging Midlands artists through commissions, further supporting and developing a queer Midlands voice across artforms. Whilst this might all sound very 'art-speak', in essence SHOUT showcases awesome art and performance by LGBT people, creates and supports opportunities for Midlands LGBT artists, and encourages training and development for Midlands venues around LGBT topics.

**Time out**

**Where do you like to go on a night out?**

It doesn't happen all that often! I love good food and good drink, and so anywhere that can offer me those makes me a happy girl. I really love theatre, cinema and gigs too - so a night that starts with food and drink and ends in a show is always a treat.

**What do you do to relax?**

I knit, I draw, I write, I take photographs, I go for wanders around forests (Cannock Chase is my current fave!), I attend classes to learn new things (next up, Siori weaving!), I embroider, I make clothes, I listen to

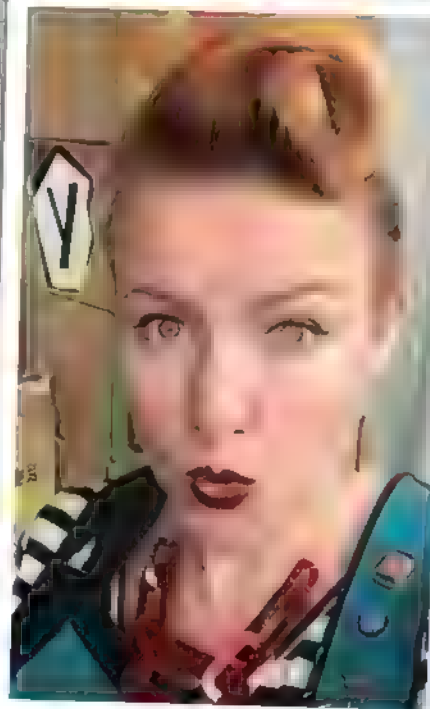
podcasts, and of late I'm learning about spirituality and mindfulness.

**What was the last track or album you bought or downloaded?**

I have Spotify, so now only tend to purchase music if it's a limited edition vinyl copy with digital download. The last record I bought was Laura Marling's LUMP project, which I'm struggling to get into as much as her older work. I'm listening to a lot of Jesca Hoop, The Staves, First Aid Kit, and the Light Princess soundtrack. Because: Tori Amos.

**What type of holiday do you prefer?**

ALL OF THEM. Favourite places are New York and Vegas, but I'm equally happy wandering about the Scottish Highlands peacefully. If there's art and coffee and beauty, then I'm happy.



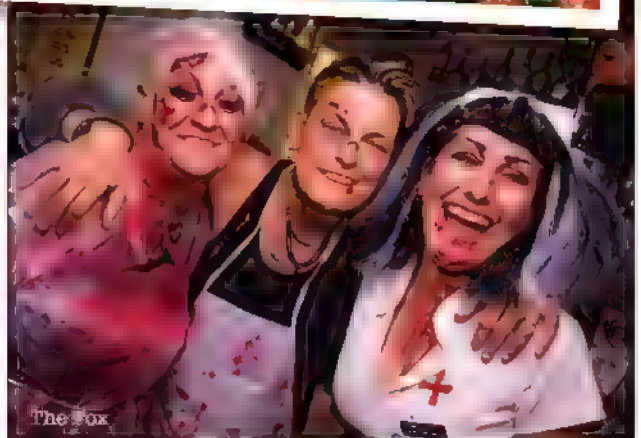
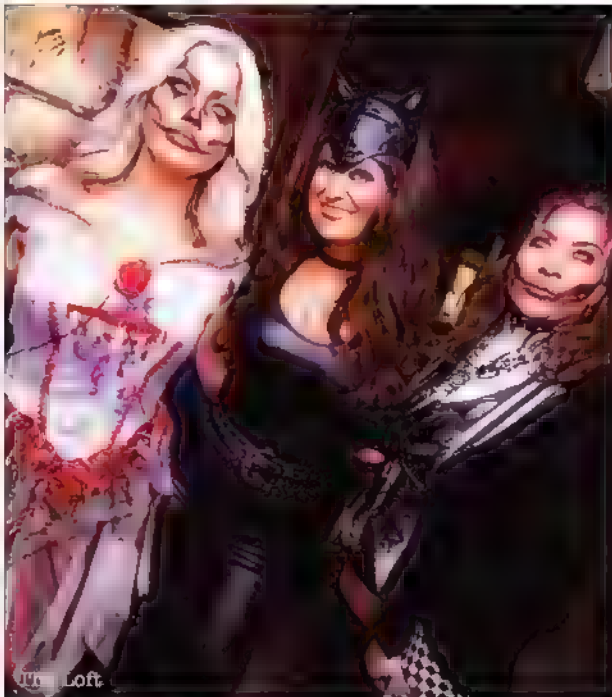




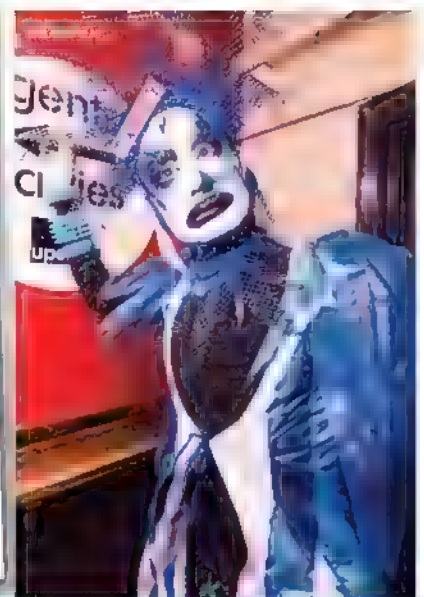
# NIGHTMARE ON

**It's one of the biggest and best nights out on the Birmingham gay scene. Yes, that's fright - sorry, right - it's Halloween!**

It was another spectacular effort from the gay scene faithful, who rocked up in all manner of spooky fancy dress in and around the gay village's ever-popular Hurst Street. Check out some of the gloriously ghoulish glad rags on display in this splendidly scary selection of spine tinglingly super snaps!



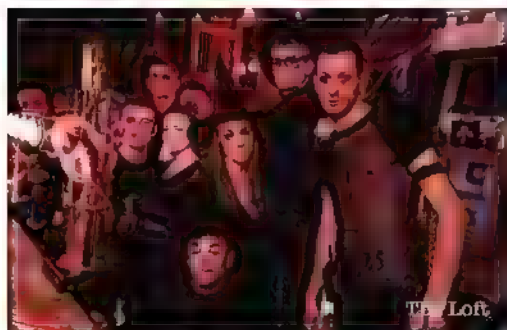
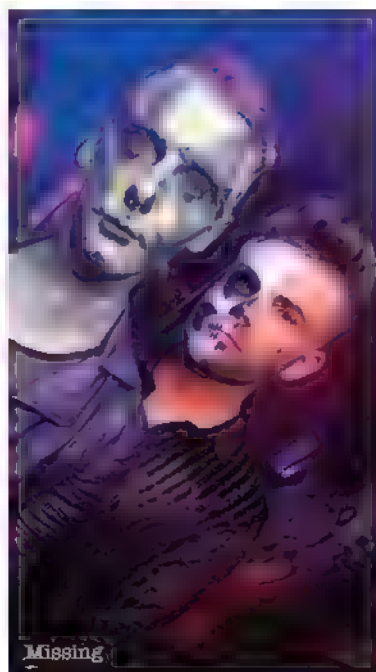
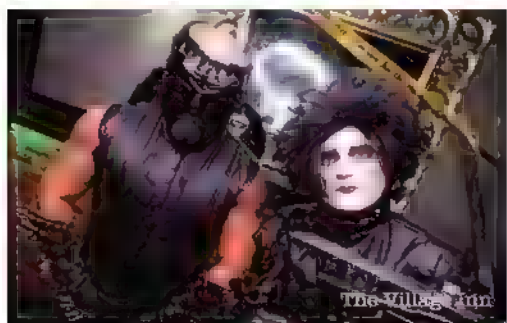
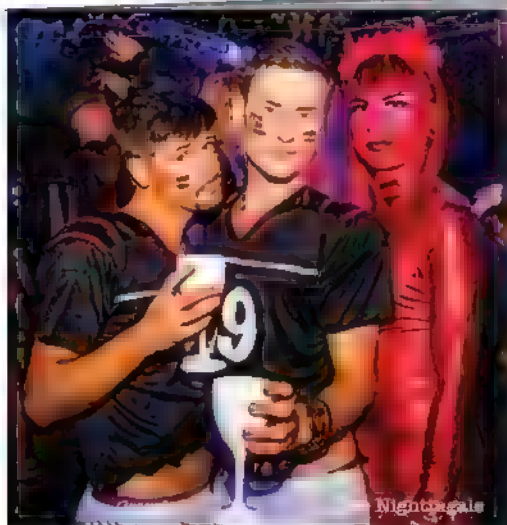




# HURST STREET!

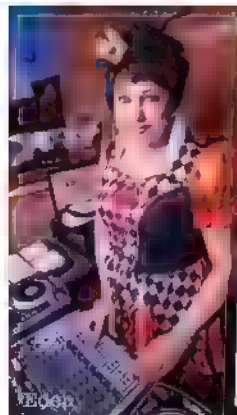
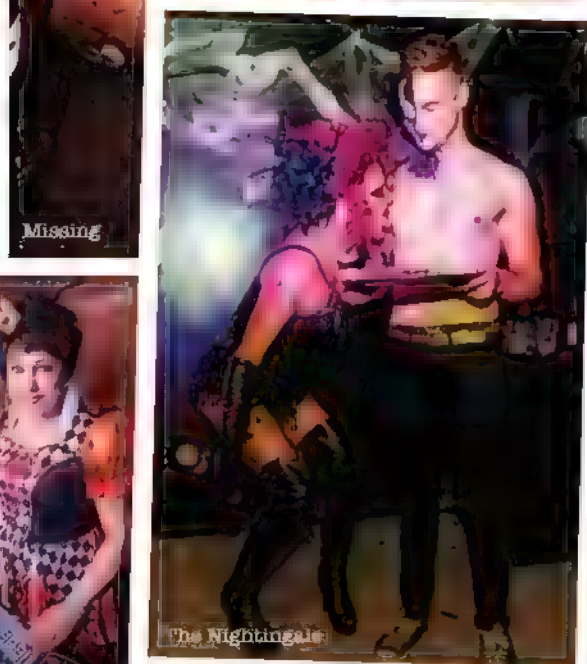
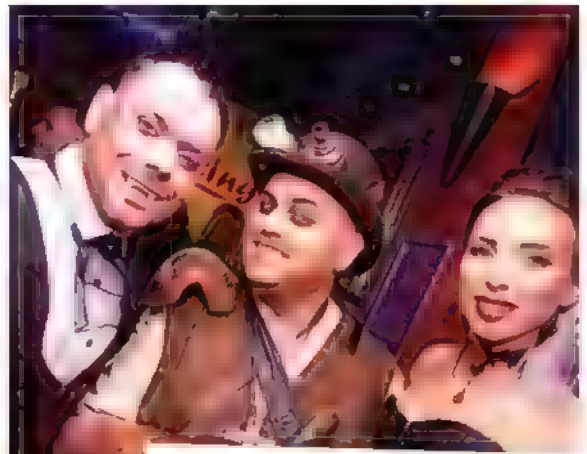








# NIGHTMARE ON HURST STREET!





# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

**Harry Clayton-Wright  
invites Midlands  
audiences to rifle through  
the gay porn collection  
his dad gave him...**





**Harry Clayton-Wright is an internet sensation, his videos having attracted a combined total of 2.5 million-plus views. But there's more to this Blackpool-born digital star than his visually arresting online output. Zone met up with Harry ahead of his appearance in Birmingham, where he'll be performing his first ever full-length theatre show, *Sex Education*...**

**So, Harry, tell us - who is Harry Clayton-Wright?**

I'm an entertainer, performance artist, internet provocateur and international mischief maker. I'm lucky to have travelled the globe, performing all around the world.

**How old were you when you decided you wanted to perform?**

I'd say it was in high school. I always loved drama club. We had to decide where we wanted to go to college, and I chose to do a performing arts course in Blackpool. My interest was making contemporary dance routines to Kate Bush songs, and luckily I had teachers who facilitated that creativity. I enjoyed it very much, but I knew I wasn't going to travel a conventional path.

**Tell us about your formative years growing up in Blackpool...**

It's a hedonistic place, and I really fell into that scene during my late teenage years. Blackpool has a really lively gay scene. I grew up watching incredible drag queens and staying out until I had to go to college the next day. I'd sleep under a pile of coats in the rehearsal room.

**Who/what inspired you to become a performer?**

I think growing up in Blackpool and being exposed to entertainment helped. I was also obsessed with Pee wee Herman when I was a teenager, and that style of offbeat character comedy. It amazed and delighted me that they got to create their own world with their own rules.

**And who inspires you most now?**

I can get quite lost on Tumblr, enjoying ridiculous GIFs and pornography.

**Your blog states that your work spans genre and taste levels. Can you expand on the latter?**

I've always been someone who likes to push the boundaries, and that can sometimes be quite shocking for people. I'm quite well known for an act

where I dress as Freddie Mercury from the I Want To Break Free video and insert the handle of an upright vacuum cleaner up my butt. That's certainly not to everyone's taste, but it's definitely entertainment!

**Sex Education is your first full-length theatre show. Tell us about its origins. What can audiences expect?**

The show is about how we learn about sex, the lack of LGBTQ+ sex education and how that shapes us later in life, specifically within my own experience. My mum never spoke with me about sex and my dad bought me five gay porn DVDs when I was 14 years old. So all those years later, I interviewed my mum so that we could finally have the chat, which was really funny, moving and revelatory, actually. We really get into it. And as an audience, we watch the porn I was given by my father. Throughout the show, I weave in stories from my sexual past and open it up for discussion. It's a cathartic experience. It's also a lot of fun and quite explicit, both emotionally and visually.

**Of all your YouTube videos, which was the most fun to make?**

I used to make deliberately bad music-video recreations, mostly because I thought it was funny and also because fans of the original artist would be quite angered by them and leave hateful comments, which just gave them way more views. One remake of a Jennifer Lopez video has over a million hits, and that was quite fun to make. I fashioned a bikini out of tin foil and stuck it to my body with PVA glue. On one occasion I made a video in the bathtub, singing Part Of Your World from *The Little Mermaid* - and from doing that, I was flown to LA by Gay Times to interview the directors of the film at Walt Disney Animation Studios.

**What annoys you about the performing arts?**

The lack of financial stability certainly keeps things interesting.

**Where have you most enjoyed performing?**

I've had some truly incredible and debauched times at Glastonbury. One year I played a teenage girl who wouldn't leave her bedroom, in a performance that lasted 107 hours (the entire duration of the festival). The window got smashed in on the last night. Things got pretty crazy.

**What's the best compliment you've ever received about your work?**

I feel like anybody purchasing a ticket to my show is always a huge compliment.

**And the worst...?**

Well, some people would call this the worst, but I like to wear it with a badge of pride. The Mirror came to a performance I was in and called me a 'deranged manic gay bloke'. I was utterly thrilled; it's still on my bio to this day.

**You currently perform solo. If you had free rein to produce a performance piece with anyone, who would you choose?**

I've been admiring Lydia L'Scabies - an amazing drag queen from Brighton - from afar for a while...

**Where would you like to see yourself and your art form in 10 years' time?**

I'd like to have made some more shows, short films and created a body of work to be enjoyed as an exhibition. As long as I'm pushing myself further and still learning, then it's still enjoyable.

**And finally, top or bottom?**

I'm very ambidextrous. Door's on the latch...

**Harry Clayton-Wright's *Sex Education* shows at The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, on Monday 12 November as part of annual queer arts & culture festival SHOUT.**



# NATIONAL HIV TESTING WEEK

BOOM!

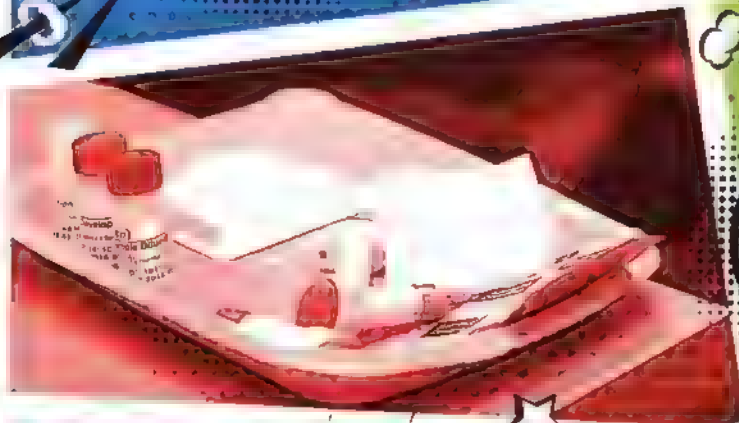
RESULTS IN 60 SECONDS

Find out where & when  
[WWW.BLGHT.ORG/PRICKTESTRESULT](http://WWW.BLGHT.ORG/PRICKTESTRESULT)

## PRICK



## TEST



## RESULT



#PRICKTESTRESULT



Birmingham LGBT Supported by

umbrella





# THRUPPLES AND BEYOND

## Questions to ask yourself if you're in a poly relationship

Relationships come in all shapes and sizes - including poly relationships - and as long as everyone is respected and happy, that's fine. Gaylife Stoke here takes the opportunity to ask and discuss some of the questions to consider if you're in a relationship of three or more.

### **Is everyone involved happy with (and aware of) the arrangements?**

This is probably the most important thing to consider in relationships of three or more. Poly relationships are 100% okay as long as everyone involved clearly knows the boundaries and each partner communicates effectively. Not being clear on the rules of your open relationship, or having partners who think you're monogamous, can lead to real unhappiness and upset.

### **Have you considered the impact of new relationships on your current relationship(s)?**

Make sure you have an open and honest conversation with your current partners if you're thinking of introducing new partners into the mix.

Assess the impact of dating or having sex with someone new, and set boundaries in terms of what is acceptable for each partner.

### **Do you know the laws around consent?**

Consent is always a hot topic when we go out into the community, with lots of people not knowing the laws surrounding the issue. The main thing to remember is that consent is freely given and is an enthusiastic yes. In a poly relationship, you need to remember that consent must be given for each sexual act - and especially if you're having group sex, as you need to communicate with multiple people. Brush up on your knowledge of consent at [pauseplaystop.org.uk](http://pauseplaystop.org.uk).

### **Are you doing something to make someone else happy?**

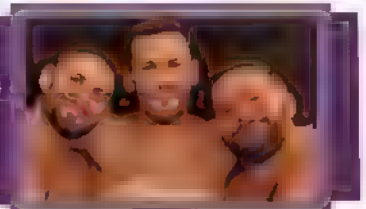
Make sure all of your romantic decisions are yours and not someone else's. Sometimes when you get feelings for someone, it's easy to want to please that person. Don't have sex with anyone you don't want to - make sure it's your decision and something (or someone) you want to do!

### **Are your sexual health practices on point?**

Having multiple sexual partners can mean infections spread fast if one person is positive. Make sure you're using condoms to protect yourself (dental dams for oral sex on vaginas/anuses) and going for regular sexual health check-ups if you're sexually active.

**INTERVIEW  
MONTH!**

In our December issue, we talk exclusively to a Birmingham-based thrupple: Martin Farrow, James Hickmott and Dan Heatsey - to find out about the highs and lows of their thrupple relationship.





A young man with dark hair and a light beard is smiling and pointing his right index finger upwards. He is wearing a dark jacket over a white t-shirt. The background is a solid blue color.

**When did you  
last test for HIV?**



**With National HIV Testing Week taking place this month, the all-important question is, when did you last test for the virus? Midlands Zone here joins up with Terrence Higgins Trust to raise awareness about the need to look after your sexual health...**

It's recommended that gay and bi men test for HIV at least once a year - and more often than that if you've had unprotected sex or slept with more than one partner.

You can live a long and healthy life with HIV - but first you've got to get tested and know your status.

It's easier to test than ever before. Just head to [startswithme.org.uk](http://startswithme.org.uk) to find out where to test locally or order your free HIV self sampling kit, allowing you to test at home, send off the sample and get your result in around a week.

To celebrate National HIV Testing Week, the Terrence Higgins Trust spoke to two guys from the Midlands - Isaiah, from Birmingham (pictured), and Andrew, from Lincolnshire.

Isaiah tests regularly for HIV and always receives a negative result; Andrew got his positive diagnosis four years ago

'I'd been with my now-husband, Ricardo, for about five weeks," explains Andrew "We weren't that committed prior to my HIV diagnosis and, as an added complication, I wasn't actually out as gay at the time. I knew I really liked him, but I didn't know where it was going. When you go through something like a HIV diagnosis with someone, it makes you stronger

'The gay community is more aware of HIV and looks after their sexual health more, but I wasn't as clued up. I moved to London and put myself more at risk than I actually realised.

'Ricardo got a text from a guy he was seeing before me who said he might want to get tested because he had gonorrhoea. So we both went to get

tested. I didn't have gonorrhoea, but I did have HIV.'

That was back during National HIV Testing Week in 2014. Now, four years later, Andrew's one of the faces of the week and wants everyone to give HIV the finger and get tested.

He now knows how good for his health early diagnosis was - he will live as long and as full a life as anyone else. But that doesn't mean it wasn't hard for him to accept at first.

'The day after my diagnosis, I remember walking down to the train station and seeing the massive 'I'm Testing' poster for National HIV Testing Week. The poster stayed up for ages, greeting me every day. And that was at a time when I didn't know very much about HIV or whether I was going to be alright. But now I know so much more and know I'm going to be absolutely fine. Now I'm married and fitter than ever - and effective treatment means I can't pass the virus on..'

'I get tested for HIV every three months," says 20 year-old Isaiah. "The first time I tested, I was 17. I'd gone along after researching HIV. I was having unprotected sex with my partner at the time. He tested regularly and was my first sexual partner, but I still decided I should start going to the clinic.

'As a gay man, I thought I should be more aware of HIV, both for my own health and so that I could educate friends. It wasn't that I thought I had HIV, I just thought I should go and do it and get into the habit of it. And I got the result pretty fast.'

Like Isaiah, if you're not sure whether you're due a test, you can go to [startswithme.org.uk](http://startswithme.org.uk) and use the 'when to test?' quiz

'I now go every three months for a sexual health check up," Isaiah continues. "I don't get nervous because I don't anticipate getting a positive result, but it's important to do it. I like being sexually liberated, and if you're testing regularly, there's nothing wrong with that. That's why it's fun to get involved in this campaign.'

As a young gay man, Isaiah wishes he hadn't had to learn so much about HIV for himself. But the first person he met who was living with the virus - his friend's boyfriend - made a big impact on him.

'It really affected his mental health and he was depressed for a while,' says Isaiah. 'He wouldn't go out or date anyone. But then he accessed the support he needed and the medication. He then started to date again and became happier. HIV is just a part of him; it had stopped him at one point, but then he moved through it. There is life after a HIV diagnosis.'

**National HIV Testing Week starts on Saturday 17 November. There are loads of opportunities to get tested and find out your status.**

**Testing for HIV is quick, easy and confidential. For more information about where, when and why to test, visit [startswithme.org.uk](http://startswithme.org.uk).**

**National HIV Testing Week is part of It Starts With Me, the HIV-prevention campaign run by Terrence Higgins Trust on behalf of Public Health England.**

## New HIV diagnoses dropping among gay and bi men

Last year we heard of the news. We've

...and effect it, which means that people living with HIV c  
...all have a ...ero HIV transp

...at home. Visit: [startswithme.org.uk](http://startswithme.org.uk)





# GIVE HIV THE FINGER

A finger-prick test is all it takes.



ORDER A FREE POSTAL TEST OR FIND WHERE TO TEST

**StartsWithMe.org.uk**



© 2018 Terrence Higgins Trust. All rights reserved. HIV is a virus that can be passed on through blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk. It can also be passed on from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. HIV can lead to AIDS, which is a life-threatening condition. However, with the right treatment, people with HIV can live long, healthy lives. For more information, visit [www.startswithme.org.uk](http://www.startswithme.org.uk)







**One  
Fingerprick**



**20  
Minutes**



**Your  
Results!**

Get a fast, free and confidential HIV test  
for HIV Testing Week!

[www.20mintesting.co.uk](http://www.20mintesting.co.uk)

**HIV Testing  
Week**

**17th - 23rd  
November**

# HIV myths we need to stop believing



There's a lot of false information floating around about HIV, which can either make people pretty worried about their health or, on the other hand, pretty complacent about getting tested.

Here we bust some HIV myths and provide some useful information about this sexually transmitted infection...

## **Myth #1 - "If you have HIV you will get AIDS" FALSE!**

This is probably the most common misunderstanding we hear in our sex & relationships education sessions in schools and colleges. First, we need to understand the difference between HIV and AIDS; HIV is the virus and AIDS is the name of a stage of your health after the virus has significantly damaged your immune system. Most people living with HIV today won't get AIDS, thanks to advances in treatment.

## **Myth #2 - "If you're HIV-positive you will never be able to have sex without a condom" FALSE!**

People who are on effective treatment for HIV can't pass on the virus. This means that if you're HIV positive and you're taking your medication as recommended by your healthcare professional, you can't pass on the infection because the levels of it are so low in your blood. The important thing here is that you must be on effective treatment - the healthcare professional you see will be able to advise you if your treatment is working as it should be.

## **Myth #3 - "Testing for HIV is painful" FALSE!**

Testing has never been easier - if you take a test with us, it's just a quick fingerprick and you get your results in 20 minutes! Take a look at our demo video to see a run through of what to expect when you see us for a test. You can check out when our HIV testing drop-ins are at: [20mintesting.co.uk](http://20mintesting.co.uk)

## **Myth #4 - "If I had HIV I'd know about it" FALSE!**

About 80% of people infected with HIV experience a short, flu-like illness (fever, sore throat, body rash) a few weeks after infection. But that '80%' statistic means that the other 20%, or one in five, won't have any symptoms at all. Even for those who do have the flu-like illness, after it passes, HIV may not cause any other symptoms for several years, meaning it goes undiagnosed and can start to damage your body.

## **Myth #5 - "If you're HIV-positive you will die earlier" FALSE!**

This myth was once actually true, but due to the fact that treatment is now fantastic, the most recent statistics show that people living with HIV have a life expectancy pretty much the same as people who haven't got it.

## **Myth #6 - "HIV can be passed by toilet seats/sharing towels/hot tubs" FALSE!**

The virus can't survive outside the body for long, so it can't be spread by things like toilet seats, towels, hot tubs, glasses or cutlery.

The only ways HIV can be spread are:

- anal or vaginal sex without a condom (also oral sex, but this is rare)
- sharing needles
- sharing sex toys
- contaminated blood coming into contact with the genitals, mouth, eyes

or an open sore/wound

- from mother to child during pregnancy/birth/breastfeeding

## **Myth #7 - "If you have HIV you can't have a baby" FALSE!**

Transmissions from mother to child are now extremely rare in the UK (below 1%) because of medical interventions and excellent treatment. It's important to know your HIV status to reduce the chance of passing the infection on to your child; all pregnant people in the UK are tested for HIV, but it's best to know your status before you get pregnant, to make sure you are on effective treatment if you're HIV positive.

## **Myth #8 - "People living with HIV must have slept around" FALSE!**

Sex is just one way that HIV is spread, but not everyone who has HIV has even had sex. Some people with HIV may have had sex once with a long term partner and caught it from that one time. Some people may be HIV positive because their mother passed it onto them when breastfeeding. It's important not to judge people or make assumptions about them based on their HIV status.

**You can find out more about HIV and sexual health on GayLife Stoke's website, [www.lgbtstoke.co.uk](http://www.lgbtstoke.co.uk)**







**Top why there's a role for all of us in Birmingham's  
TQ+ campaign...**

**Tell us about your involvement in the Ageing With Pride campaign, Rico...**

I work as the campaign manager for Ageing With Pride at Birmingham LGBT. My day-to-day work consists of organising community outreach activities, coordinating advertising for the campaign, scheduling social media, and altogether ensuring that Ageing With Pride maximises its reach. This will be the most important step in making sure that the campaign reaches even the most isolated members of our community.

**How's it going so far?**

It's going well. My role is challenging, and I feel like I've learned so much about not only myself but the older generation as a whole, by getting out there and meeting the people we're trying to serve. My job is a balancing act, to ensure that the needs of one person don't ostracise another. I'm always looking for ways to engage with communities that aren't being represented. Working with older LGBT people on this project is fantastic because you get to make real change in the world through action.

**Give us an example of some of the most common issues facing older members of the LGBT community...**

A number of people in the older community are severely isolated. The biggest hurdle for the campaign is how to target individuals who're isolated, to inform them of activity to help tackle that isolation. As challenging as this is, Birmingham LGBT and I have pulled out all the stops to ensure we're running this campaign the right way. We've engaged with people who face homophobia in care-home situations, and with individuals with dementia who forget they've come out at all. Then there are people who lost partners during the AIDS crisis, and who've never received proper care or treatment to combat the fallout from this because it was a different time for the LGBT community.

All of us are ageing - fact - yet many of us are eager to ignore that reality. This consequently results in some of us inadvertently ignoring older people's issues. This is especially prevalent in the LGBT+ community because of how driven it is by aesthetic and youth, perhaps most

commonly in our commercial spaces. Often, social barriers aren't considered by segments of the larger LGBT+ community, and that's a main issue here.

**Had you ever considered these problems prior to becoming involved in the campaign?**

Some of the things that I've learned were logical after taking time to consider the plight of some older LGBT people, but others surprised me. Although I've had my fair share of isolation due to class and race, I'd never thought about 'isolation due to age' in the LGBT+ community

**What single fact unearthed as part of the campaign's research has surprised you the most?**

By far the most shocking fact to come out of our research is that there's no real concern about or perception of ageing in the LGBT+ community. The gay scene is accepted as being for younger people, just as clubs appeal to younger people whether they're LGBT or not. The facilities of Birmingham LGBT and the number of LGBT community led groups were, in part, the reason why this was less of a concern than anticipated. However, this doesn't help members of the older LGBT community who are isolated - nor does it help in terms of tackling issues of ageism in the community. We can all work a little bit harder to make space for older people in our lives, whether that's through conversations in public spaces or even trips to your older neighbour's house for a cup of tea, if they're willing.

**It's still early days, but what hurdles have you come across so far in getting the message over?**

We've mostly received positive feedback, although there's been a bit of discourse around why it's important to tackle these issues in the mainstream and not internally. There have also been a few chats about whether isolation is an issue at all, especially from younger members of the LGBT+ community. I think these conversations are what the campaign is all about. Open dialogue is extremely important to help change one of the biggest issues facing our community.

**Isolation is a huge issue in the UK, and not just in terms of the LGBTQ+ community. What do you believe the government could or should do to tackle the problem?**

The government has just appointed Tracey Crouch as minister for loneliness, which is definitely a step in the right direction. Nationwide research should be undertaken to establish what creates particularly high rates of isolation in certain groups, and funding should be allocated to tackle the issues rather than simply deal with the symptoms. On an interpersonal level, I think more regular community-based activities could help some of the more immediate issues, whilst sustainable solutions to what can only be called an epidemic should be seamlessly actioned in modern society.

**How can people become involved in the Ageing With Pride project?**

We have a number of voluntary roles connected to the campaign - ambassadors who can act as the 'boots on the ground', and even advisory roles for those with limited mobility. Despite my expertise, I could serve the community better with the knowledge from lived experience. It's so important that our over-50s engage with this campaign.

**How do you plan to keep your rainbow?**

Birmingham LGBT and I will continue to fight for the underrepresented, making sure that voices are heard. I will use my platform to speak for the experiences that aren't shown to the wider public, and which are disregarded by people in positions of power who are actually well placed to make a difference. We all live on this planet together, so we need to find a way to weave positive changes into the tapestry of this life. I plan to be a part of that.

**You can learn what Ageing With Pride is doing for Birmingham by attending the project's community launch at The Loft, in the city's gay village, on 1 November (from 6.30pm). Refreshments will be included. And best of all, the event is completely free!**



# What's On

Thurs 1 - Sun 11 November



## Danny Beard returns to Eden Bar

Danny Beard is back at Brum's Eden Bar on November the 3rd. The Scouse star will be singing the very best cabaret tunes, intertwined with comedy that will have you bellybusting all night long. If you've not seen Danny before - or even if you have - pop along and sayhello!

**Saturday 3 November - Eden, Birmingham**

## Letitia has The Voice

Letitia George rose to stardom back in 2015 when she appeared on the fourth series of The Voice UK, making her mark with some truly killer vocals. Unfortunately, Letitia left the show during the knock out rounds, but has since been touring the country with her live band. Check her out at The Yard this month.

**Saturday 3 November  
The Yard, Coventry**



## Brenda LaBeau set to give Shrewsbury a Fabulous Monday!

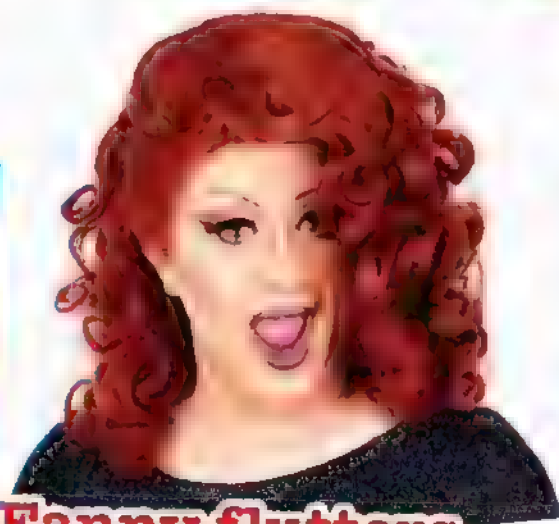
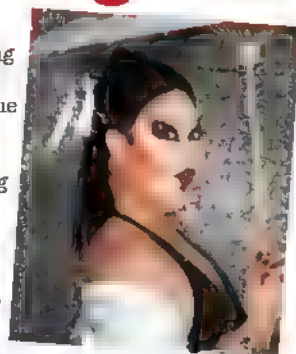
The amazing Brenda LaBeau returns to Shrewsbury venue Havana Republic for its weekly gay night, Fabulous Mondays. Expect an evening of quality comedy and popular song. Don't miss it!

**Monday 3 November -  
Havana Republic, Shrewsbury**

## There's Sum Ting Wong!

The fantastic and ever-popular Sum Ting Wong returns to Birmingham gay venue The Village Inn on Friday the 2nd, presenting an evening of show-stopping entertainment and hilarious comedy!

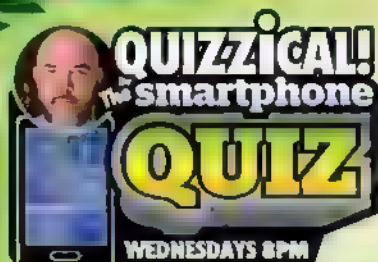
**Friday 2 November -  
The Village Inn,  
Birmingham**



## Fanny flutters at Brum bar

If you fancy a fun filled evening of comedy and cabaret, pop on down to Birmingham's Eden Bar and join Fanny Burns as she entertains the masses live on stage. Entry to the show is free, but best get down there good'n'early to secure your spot - it's sure to be a busy night!

**Saturday 10 November - Eden Bar, Birmingham**



WEDNESDAYS 8PM  
WITH DJ YOGI SpeedQuizzing



WITH DJ NIKKI



THUR  
1st

**LA VOIX** FAREWELL TO THURSDAYS  
Don't miss what is sure to be a fantastic night with the fabulous La Voix

SAT

**DANNY BEARD**

3rd

SAT

**FANNY BURNS**

10th

THUR

**DANNY BEARD**

15th

FRI

**MIDS BEARS** Bears, Cubs, Otters & their Admirers

16th

SAT

**CHARLIE HIDES**

17th

SUN

**LEATHER SOCIAL**

18th

THUR

**BRENDA LaBEAU**

22nd

FRI

**LA VOIX** FAREWELL FRIDAY!  
As they say, all good things must come to an end. Come down and give La Voix a HUGE Goodbye & Good Luck from us all.

23rd

SAT

**CLUB SCRITCHES**

24th

SAT

**MARY MAC**

24th



**DJ PONI &  
DJ TONI LEE**



Sat. Afternoon  
[clubscratches.co.uk](http://clubscratches.co.uk)

**EVERY FRI & SUN KARAOKE & DISCO WITH DJ NIKKI**

Open from 2pm Every Day | 116 Sherlock St. Birmingham, B5 6NB | End of Hurst Street | 0121 622 1953 | [www.TheEdenBar.co.uk](http://www.TheEdenBar.co.uk)



# What's On

Mon 12 - Sun 18 November

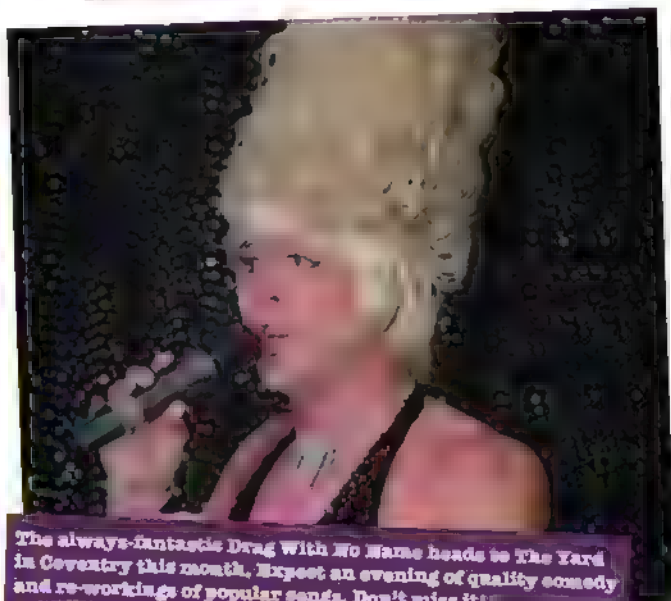
## Glitter SHIT is back!



Glitter SHIT is back - and better than ever! This time out, they're holding their very own mini-festival in the heart of Brum's gay village. With a dozen-plus acts across two stages, street food from Digbeth Dining Club, independent stores and a SHIT LOAD of glitter, grab your best festival gear and get ready to party

**Friday 16 November - The Nightingale, Birmingham**

## The Drag With No Name in Coventry!



The always-fantastic Drag With No Name heads to The Yard in Coventry this month. Expect an evening of quality comedy and re-workings of popular songs. Don't miss it!

**Friday 16 November - The Yard, Coventry**



## Celebrating Cher at The Loft

Do you believe in life after love? Because we do, and so does The Loft. This month sees the popular gay village venue paying homage to the legendary Cher, playing all her best tracks from across the years - including some from her ABBA covers album.

With free entry, there's no need to worry - they've got you, babe.

**Saturday 17 November - The Loft, Birmingham**

## Lola Lasagne heads to The Village

Up for a night of cracking cabaret? Well so are we! We're delighted to see the wonderful Lola Lasagne return to one of Birmingham's favourite cabaret venues this month.

Lola will be back on stage for a night of pure comedy gold and a good old singsong! So make sure your Friday night contains a dose of fabulous fun at The Village Inn - you won't regret it!

**Friday 16 November - The Village Inn, Birmingham**



# NOVEMBER CABARET

02 NOV

**SUM TING  
WONG**

30 NOV

**SANDRA  
LONDON**

09 NOV

**TOPSIE  
REDFERN**

16 NOV

**MISS LOLA  
LASAGNE**

23 NOV

**BAGA  
CHIPZ**

**SATURDAY 1ST DECEMBER  
WORLD AIDS DAY SPECIAL  
VICKY JACKSON AS PINK**

**THE VILLAGE INN**

[WWW.VILLAGEBIRMINGHAM.CO.UK](http://WWW.VILLAGEBIRMINGHAM.CO.UK)



VILLAGEINNBIRMINGHAM



@VILLAGEBRUM



THEVILLAGEBIRMINGHAM





# What's On

Mon 19 - Sun 25 November



## Head back to the '90s with Mel C!

Mel C - aka Sporty Spice - is bringing her '90s Mixtape party to Birmingham for a night of nostalgia, scrunchies and Buffalo trainers. Expect a Spice Girls hit or two along the way. Zig a-zig ah!

**Sat 24 November - The Nightingale, Birmingham**



## Get Pounded

Who doesn't love £1 drinks? We certainly do, and we're sure you do too - so head down to The Nightingale every Thursday for a fantastic and pleasingly cheap night out!

**Every Thursday - The Nightingale, Birmingham**



## Say farewell to Le Volz

Le Volz, the amazing cabaret performer, is leaving the Midlands for good. Don't miss her final performance at Eden Bar, Birmingham.

**Friday 23 November  
Eden Bar, Birmingham**

## Who's for a bit of Shania Pain?

Get set for another evening of top cabaret at Havana Republic's Fabulous Mondays gay night. This week it's the turn of Shania Pain, taking to the stage for her debut in the town!

**Monday 19 November -  
Havana Republic, Shrewsbury**



## What's all this Baga Chipz, love? Baga Chipz returns to The Village

The amazing Baga Chipz returns to Birmingham's Village Inn for another night of awesome cabaret. Join her and the entire award winning Village Inn team for what promises to be one of the Midlands' biggest cabaret nights of the month!

**Fri 23 November - The Village Inn, Birmingham**

# MISS PENNY'S FABULOUS MONDAYS!

DJ  
CABARET  
& HOST

THE BIGGEST GAY MONDAY NIGHT  
IN THE MIDLANDS!



FREE ENTRY ALL NIGHT! • OPEN UNTIL 4AM! • GREAT £1 DRINKS ALL NIGHT!

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SHREWSBURY

**HAVANA ★ REPUBLIC**

18-21 ABBEY FOREGATE, SHREWSBURY, SHROPSHIRE SY2 6AE TEL: 01743 271821



# What's On

Mon 26 November - Sun 2 December

## Lady Imelda Coventry-bound

Wrapping up The Yard's November cabaret of fering is the fabulous Lady Imelda - so be sure to get your pay weekend off to a fine start by enjoying a cracking night out in her company.

**Friday 30 November - The Yard, Coventry**



## Mary Mac is back in Birmingham!

Scottish drag queen Mary Mac heads to Birmingham's Eden Bar for her regular time to shine on stage at the end of this month. She'll be joined by DJ Toni Lee for a night of glorious fun in a great party atmosphere.

**Saturday 24 November - Eden, Birmingham**



## World AIDS Day with Vicky Jackson

Birmingham's favourite P.N.K. tribute artist, Vicky Jackson, returns to The Village Inn on Saturday 1 December for a World AIDS Day special - so dig deep and help raise lots of cash for some great charities!

**Sat 1 December - The Village Inn, Birmingham**



## Having a (snow) ball at The Yard

Hollyoaks' hunk Kieron Richardson will be among the guests attending The Yard's Snow Ball Street Party for World AIDS Day. Expect fire eaters, stilt walkers and a huge dance marquee, where you'll be able to party all night long. British bassline group Platinum, known for their hits What's It Gonna Be? and Love Shy (Thinking About You), will also be performing, with more acts still to be announced.

**Saturday 1 December -  
The Yard, Coventry**

## Hear me now! Sandra returns for end-of-month fun in Brum



Sandra returns to The Village Inn for her end of month residency and her penultimate Birmingham gig of 2018. There'll be hilarious jokes and fabulous singalong songs to enjoy, so why not head on down to the popular gay venue for a night of real let-your-hair-down fun!

**Friday 30 November -  
The Village Inn,  
Birmingham**

BOOK ONLINE  
**www.thsh.co.uk**  
Box office  
**0121 780 3333**

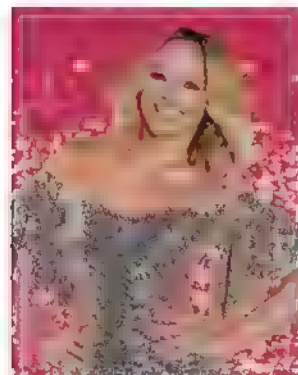
**THSH**  
TOWN  
HALL  
BIRMINGHAM  
SYMPHONY  
HALL  
BIRMINGHAM



**CHRISTMAS  
QUEENS –  
OFFICIAL TOUR**  
THU 29 NOVEMBER 8PM  
**SYMPHONY HALL**






**CLAIRE RICHARDS**  
MON 3 DECEMBER 7:30PM  
**TOWN HALL**



**CHRISTMAS  
SPECTACULAR  
WITH SPECIAL  
GUEST  
KIMBERLEY  
WALSH**  
SAT 15 DECEMBER  
2:30PM & 7:30PM  
**SYMPHONY HALL**



**PIANO  
LEGENDS  
PERFORMED  
BY MARK  
READ**  
SUN 30 DECEMBER  
7:30PM  
**SYMPHONY HALL**

 Town Hall Symphony Hall  
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PROJECT PART-FINANCED  
BY THE EUROPEAN UNION



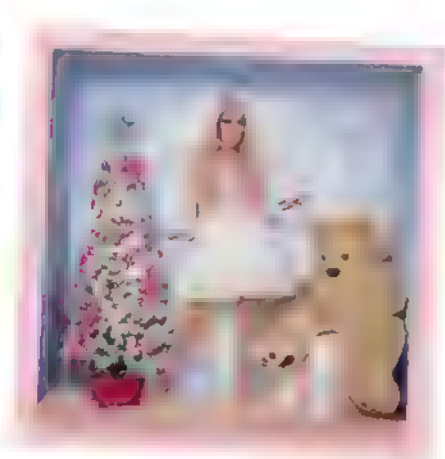
# 'Tis the season to be Mary!

Putting the YAAAS in Christmaaas (okay, that doesn't quite work, but you get the drift), RuPaul's Drag Race winner Bob The Drag Queen is hosting the festive drag spectacular that is Christmas Queens at the end of the month.

The touring show is visiting Birmingham's Symphony Hall - so before you book yourself a ticket, let's get reacquainted with the show's fabulous line-up.

## Bob The Drag Queen

Purse first! Crowned winner of Drag Race season 8, Bob The Drag Queen has gone on to have a successful career in film and comedy, last year starring in Netflix movie Cherry Pop and also releasing her very own comedy special, Suspiciously Large Woman.



## Kameron Michaels

Blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity, Kameron Michaels is the 'Bodybuilder Barbie'. Kameron became Drag Race season 10's lip-sync assassin, winning out against Monet X Change, Miz Cracker and Asia O'Hara.



## Manila Luzon

Coming runner-up in season 3 of Drag Race, Manila is best known for her lip-sync to Donna Summer's MacArthur Park, which many now consider the best lip sync 'of all time'. During her time on the show, Manila had a variety of memorable runway looks, including a Sesame Street themed outfit and a honeybee outfit made from wigs.



## Eureka O'Hara

Doing it for the big girls, Eureka O'Hara from Johnson City, Tennessee, finished as runner-up in the latest series of Drag Race. The first ever queen to leave the show on medical grounds (series 9), she received an open invitation from RuPaul herself to return for series 10.



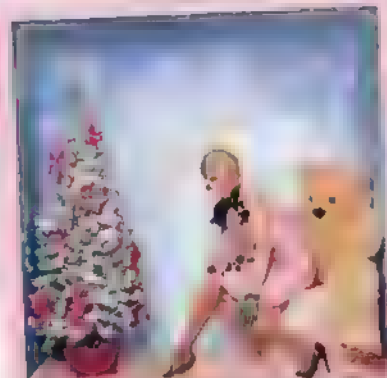
## Asia O'Hara

Before her time on Drag Race, Asia O'Hara was well known on the pageant circuit, winning several titles - including Miss Gay America 2016. Hailing from Dallas, Texas, Asia is also close friends with Texas native Drag Race alum Alyssa Edwards and the Davenport drag family.



## Blair St Clair

I do declare, it's Blair St Clair! Blair's drag name was inspired by the Gossip Girl character Blair Waldorf and a street from her hometown of Indianapolis. Earlier this year, Blair released her debut single, Now Or Never, which has so far racked up over two million views on YouTube.



## Sharon Needles

Describing herself as 'beautiful, spooky and stupid', Sharon Needles won the fourth season of Drag Race. Sharon is also drag mother to season 10 winner Aquaria, which makes the pair the first drag mother and daughter to win the competition.

**Christmas Queens comes to Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on Thursday 29 November. Tickets can be purchased at [thsh.co.uk](http://thsh.co.uk)**



# What's On

Arts • Theatre • Entertainment



## The Roast Battles

Hosted by RuPaul's Drag Race judge Ross Matthews, Klub Kids' Roast Battles is back for round two. This time out, six of the show's most hilarious queens will be taking to the stage - Bob The Drag Queen, Ginger Minj, Monét X Change, Monique Heart, Thorxy Thor and Phi Phi O'Hara. Watch them throw their best shades and reads as they battle it out to claim the coveted title of Roast Battles Champion. May the best woman win.

**Thursday 8 November, O2 Academy, Birmingham**



## Culture Club

Culture Club have sold more than 50 million records since forming way back in 1981. Their 1983 album, *Colour by Numbers*, was a huge critical and commercial success, selling over 10 million copies worldwide. After the band initially broke up in 1986, frontman Boy George pursued a solo career. The lullies have since reunited twice - from 1998 to 2002 and from 2011 to the present. This latest tour sees them combining much-loved hits, including *Do You Really Want To Hurt Me* and *Karma Chameleon*, with material from life. Their first album since 1999, released last month.

**Friday 16 November, Arena Birmingham**

## Years & Years

After the hotly anticipated release of second album *Palo Santo* earlier this year, Years & Years are back with their biggest-ever UK tour.

Fronted by LGBTQ advocate Olly Alexander, the threesome have released hit after hit over the last few years, with their debut album including sizzling hot numbers such as *King*, *Desire* and *Shine*.

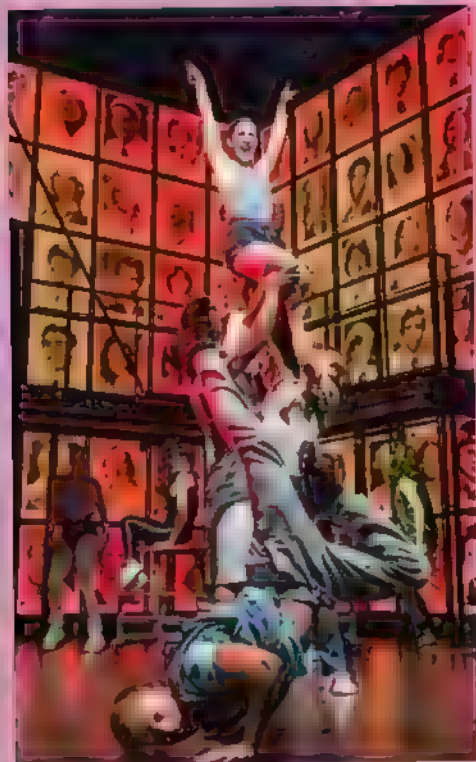
Their latest singles, *Sanctify* and *If You're Over Me*, have reminded fans just why the trio are considered one of the world's leading music acts.

Expect dancers and anthems galore in a show that no self-respecting Years & Years fan would want to miss.

**Tuesday 30 November, Arena Birmingham**



# Fame The Musical



Grab those leg warmers - Fame The Musical is out on tour and heading to the Midlands this month! Based on the smash hit 1980 movie, the show follows the lives of students at New York's High School for the Performing Arts as they navigate their way through the highs and lows of life. This 30th anniversary touring show stars Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat's Keith Jack, singer Mica Paris and Hollyoaks' Jorgie Porter.

**Monday 19 - Saturday 24 November,  
Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham**



## SHOUT Festival

celebrating the very best in queer and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans theatre, visual arts, comedy, music, film and live performance. SHOUT returns for a ninth year.

Highlights of the festival include a performance by a yore-loving cabaret sensation, a new documentary film exploring the history of lesbian activists in the UK, an immersive show inspired by the Harlem Renaissance Rent Parties of the 1920s, and a chance to rediscover the forgotten history of Birmingham's 1980s LGBT magazine, in The Pink.

**Thursday 8 - Sunday 18 November,  
Various venues across Birmingham**



## Disobedience

Premiering at last year's Toronto International Film Festival, where it received rave reviews, Sebastian Lelio's Disobedience is based on Naomi Alderman's novel of the same name. When Ronit returns to the Orthodox Jewish community which had shunned her for her attraction to a female childhood friend, passions are reignited as the two women explore the boundaries of faith and sexuality. Rachel Weisz and Rachel McAdams star.

**On general release on Friday 30 November**





# ZOE LYONS

**bringing her Entry Level Human tour to the Midlands**

Award-winning comedian Zoe Lyons returns to the Midlands this month with her new stand-up show, *Entry Level Human*. Zoe took time out from her busy schedule to talk to Midlands Zone about motivation, inspiration and her recent stint on television's *Celebrity MasterChef*...

**What's your earliest memory of being funny, Zoe?**

Oh, crikey! I think probably at primary school. I wasn't a class clown in any shape or form, but I did used to entertain the parents at the school gate. I would act out little stories in front of them. In class, I was as dull as ditchwater, so definitely wasn't the joker of the class. I suppose I just felt

more comfortable in the company of the parents. I always longed for a life of dinner parties, even at the age of eight!

**Who would you say has inspired you the most?**

It's a mixture of people. I suppose when I was growing up it was the likes

of Billy Connolly and Victoria Wood. I still enjoy watching Victoria's stuff. She was such a warm writer and brought out some lovely characters.

**Can you tell us a bit about *Entry Level Human*?**

It's a new tour show that's loosely based on the idea of human nature

and stupidity - a rich scene these days for comedians, and I include myself in that. It's a poke at human stupidity. My shows combine being slightly topical with my own take on things, which veers towards stupidity and silliness. My shows aren't aimed at changing the world; I just want to alter and iron out people's lives.

**What motivates you to get up on stage? Do you have a regular pre-show routine, and how do you wind down post-show?**

Like a lot of performers, I like to have a little bit of space before I go on stage. I know we're not performing at the London Philharmonic or on a bazooka, but comedy does require a bit of head space. I don't have any weird rituals. I used to have some little lucky 'donks' and things, but I lost so many of them that I decided they weren't all that lucky after all and I'm not superstitious, so I got rid.

"Coming down" post-show is the hard bit. I find it really difficult to go to sleep when I've been on stage. My adrenaline is up and seems to hang around for ages, so I tend to watch a movie and have a cup of cocoa. I try not to have alcohol, as that's the worst thing. Post-show is very dull, to be honest - not very rock'n'roll.

**You've performed in Birmingham numerous times. Is there anything that sets the city's audiences apart from others?**

I like playing in Birmingham. It's very diverse and you get a great mix, which is really lovely.

**Apart from being funny, what would you say makes a good comic?**

In your bag of human skills, you need to be good at being on your own; you need to be able to entertain yourself. If you don't have that skill, you'll go nuts. You need to learn to be grounded. It's a competitive business and one based on showing off. You need to be able to manage your ego and keep it in check, otherwise it could fly off like a buzzard on amphetamines, so you need to tether it like a robin in clogs. You do need to have an ego, but it needs to be proportionate in size. I guess you also need an inquisitive mind, be able to drive and be good at using Google maps. That's essential!

**Is there any subject matter that should be off-limits in comedy?**

No, I don't think anything is off limits as long as it has a point and it's done well. But there are people who should be off limits from doing comedy - for example, if their skill level isn't adequate enough to portray what they're trying to say funnily. I don't talk about certain subjects because I just don't have the skills to articulate them and deliver them properly.

**Is there anything you've ever said on stage that you've later regretted?**

Probably 'it's lovely to be here'. You say that many times, but in your head you're thinking, I can't wait to get in the car and leave this dump! No, not really! Joking apart, I don't think I have, although I've told some awful jokes, especially during the first two years of my career.

**What's the best heckle you've ever received?**

The weirdest one I ever got was when someone shouted at me, 'What made you choose those shoes?' That stuck with me for years because it was just such an odd thing to say in what I thought was a really good gig.

**Have you ever walked off stage during a set?**

Oh yeah, I've cut the set short on occasion and have endured an awful death - a terrible death that felt like it lasted four weeks when in reality it probably lasted 12 minutes - when the audience have just stared at you like you've done something unspeakable to their dinner, in a space where the sound is quieter than silence.

**Where's the best place you've ever performed?**

Crikey, they all vary, but I suppose it has to be Kilkenny. I played the festival there for the first time a few years ago. It was magical, and they were such an energetic audience. The whole town was there for the festival, and the atmosphere was electric.

**What do you like to do when you're not being funny?**

I like to cook and to eat. I like to plan trips away, and I like scuba diving. The wife and I are either planning trips, going on a trip or buying ridiculous stuff made out of neon print to go on trips. We also read up about fish...

**Talking of cooking, has your recent experience on *Celebrity MasterChef* changed you in any way?**

I'm definitely more adventurous in the kitchen. I'll give stuff a go that I wouldn't have done before. I was typically one of those people who would read a recipe, get halfway through and go, God, I don't know how to do that. Now I'll give it a go.

**How do you put your new-found skills to use? Do you plan massive dinner parties for friends and family?**

No, that's the sad bit. Because I work nights, I'm normally sat eating a pot noodle with a teaspoon in a hotel room. So when I have a bit of time and I'm home and it's just me and my wife, I'll try and cook something different or new. I like to mix things up and not stick to recipes like most people do.

**What would you have done as a job if you hadn't become a comedian?**

Absolutely nothing that involved being inside and wearing a suit. I think I'd have liked to be a ski instructor, a landscape gardener, a forest ranger or a fisherman.

**You've been on the circuit for 14 years now. How have attitudes changed towards female comedians during that time?**

I've had audiences walk out and shout at me, fold their arms saying that they're not going to listen to a woman. D'you know what, though - it being harder initially has probably made it better for us now. Female comedians had to work harder; we had to come up with more diverse material because we were always judged so harshly.

It wouldn't matter if there were four blokes who'd all done material about Star Wars - they wouldn't be judged on that, but if you were to get up on stage and say something that was typically female, you were immediately picked up on it. That's now changed because of television - it's a much more balanced environment nowadays.

**Zoe performs her new show, *Entry Level Human*, at Nottingham Glee Club on Thursday 8 November and then at Birmingham Glee Club on Sunday 18 November. Tickets are available via [zoelyons.co.uk](http://zoelyons.co.uk)**





# Keep Your Rainbow

Getting older shouldn't mean fading away. Keep your rainbow and age with pride.

Find out how at [ageingwithpride.co.uk](http://ageingwithpride.co.uk)  
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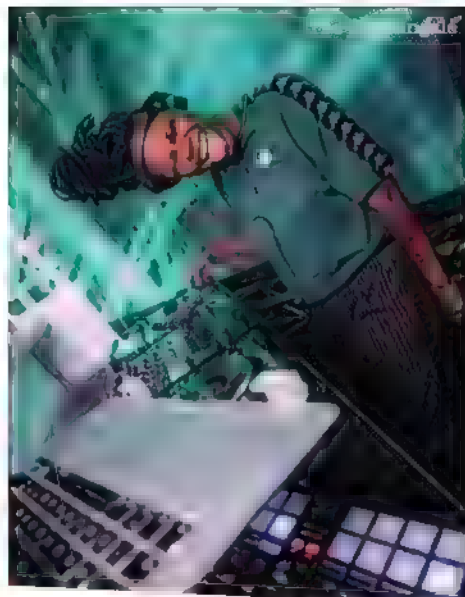
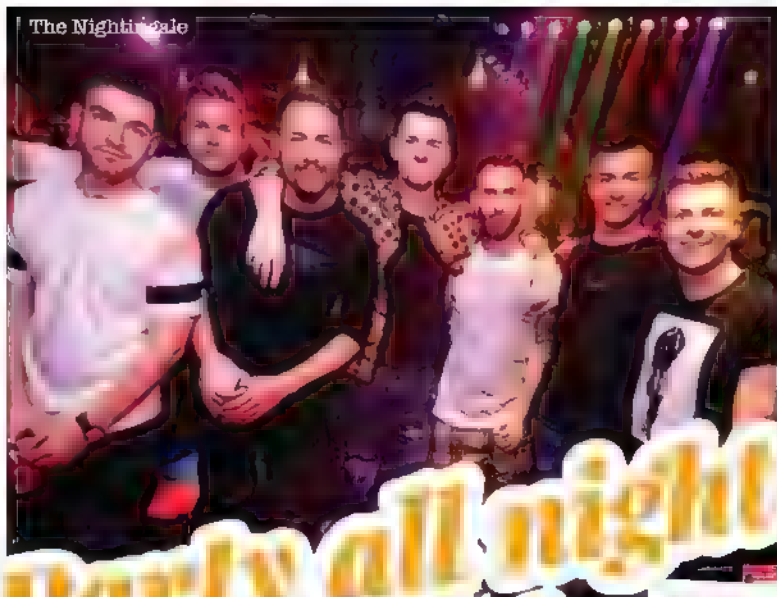


**Ageing  
with Pride**



Contact us:  
0121 643 0821  
[info@ageingwithpride.co.uk](mailto:info@ageingwithpride.co.uk)

The Nightingale

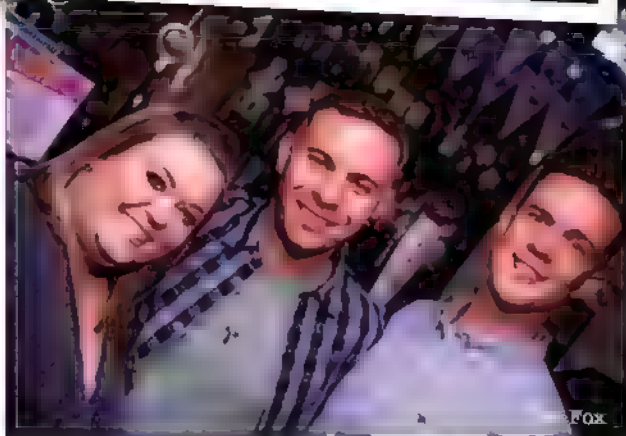
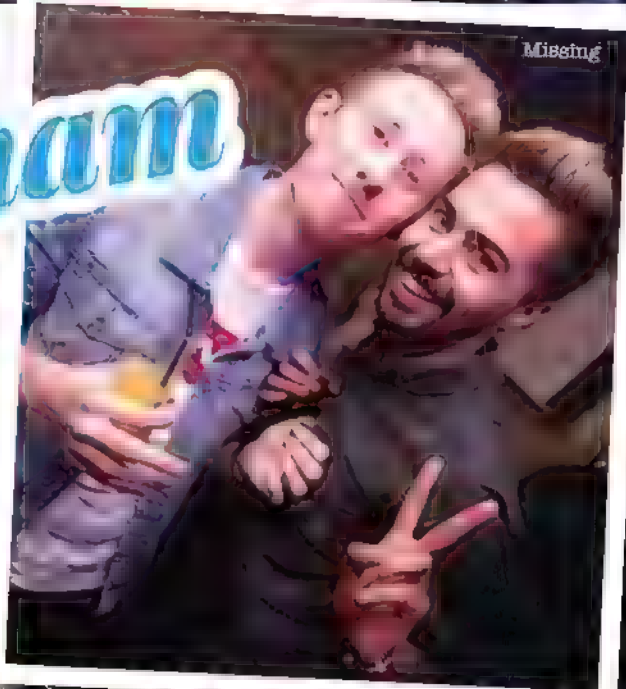
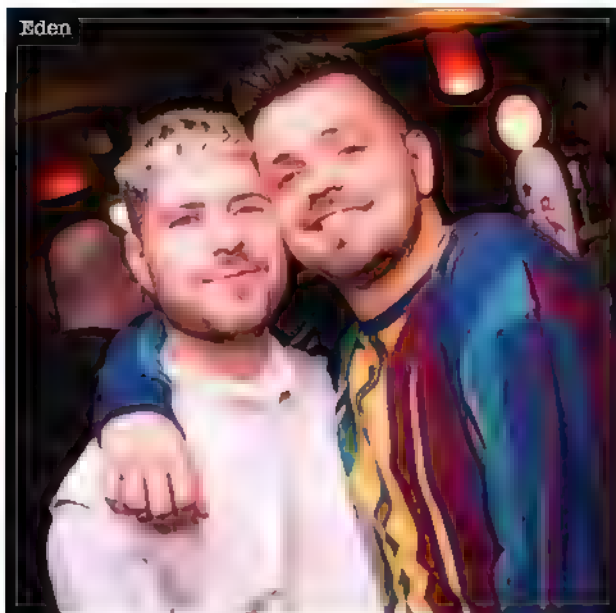


# Party all night in vibrant Birmingham

**If you're out for the night in Birmingham,  
then the city's gay scene is a great place to be!**

With over 15 bars and clubs to choose from, there really is  
something for everyone! It's a truly fab night out!

Eden





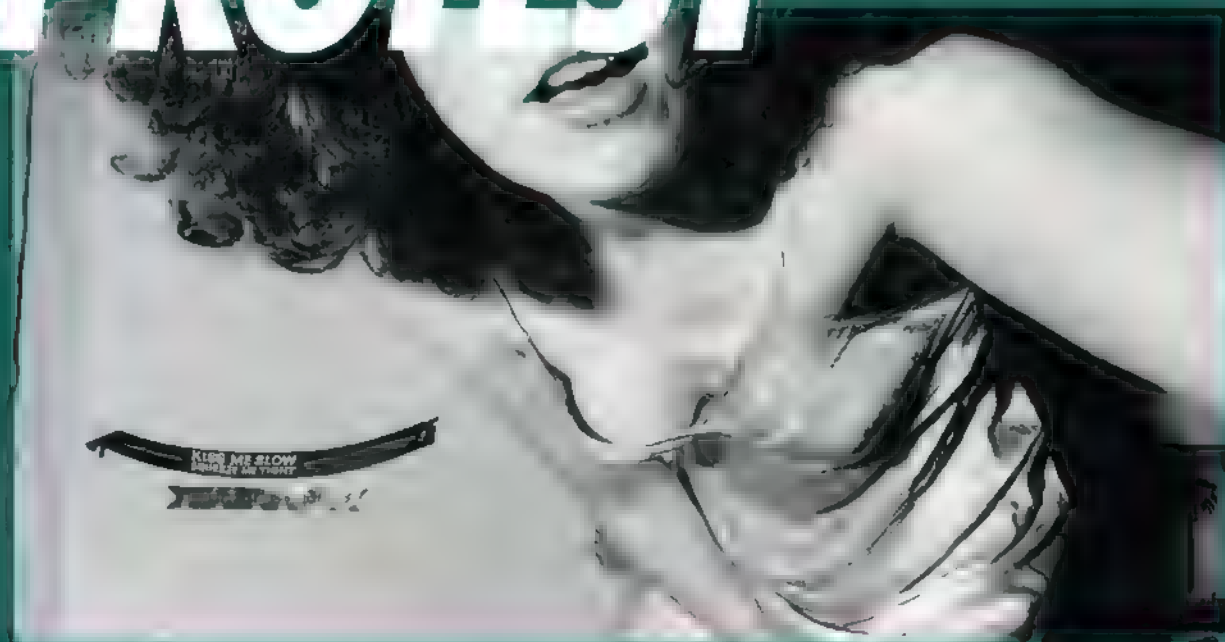


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Arts Council  
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#ACC National Partners #womenpowerprotest

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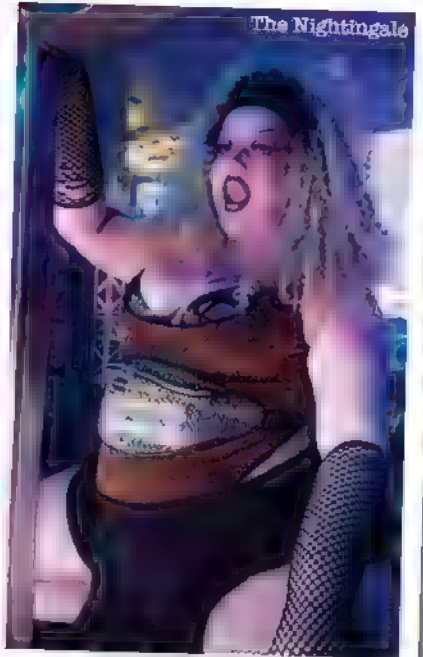
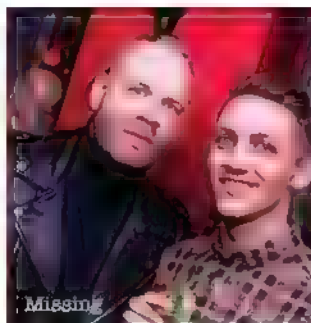
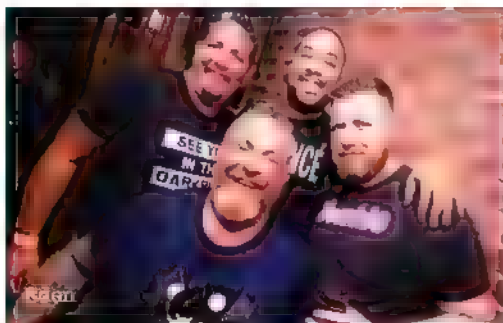
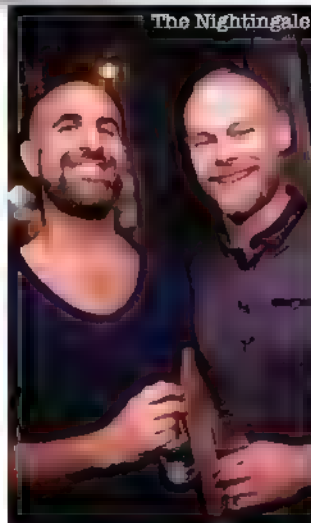
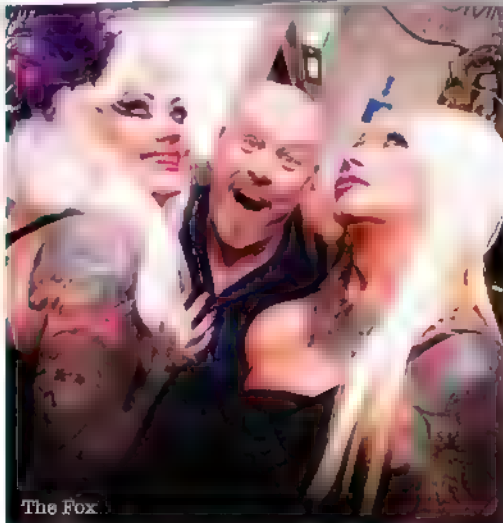
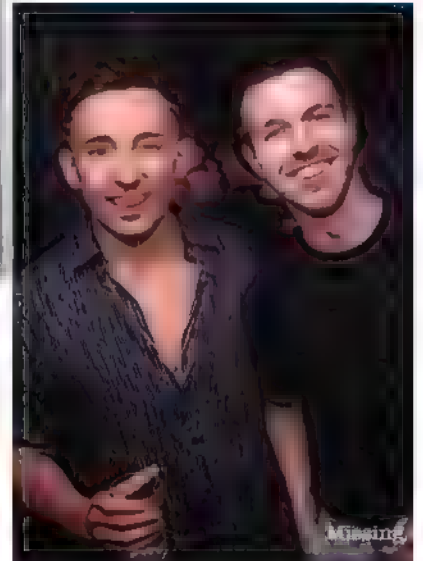
ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND



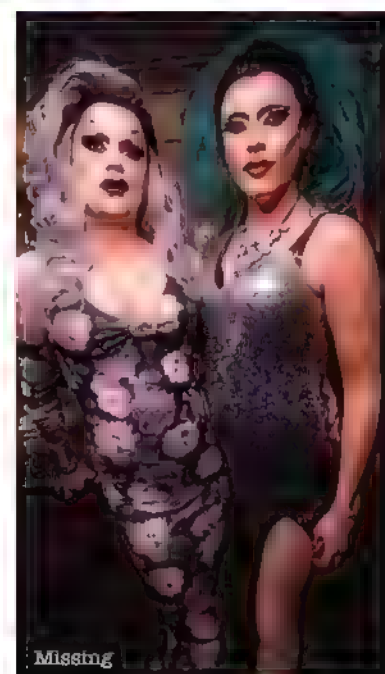
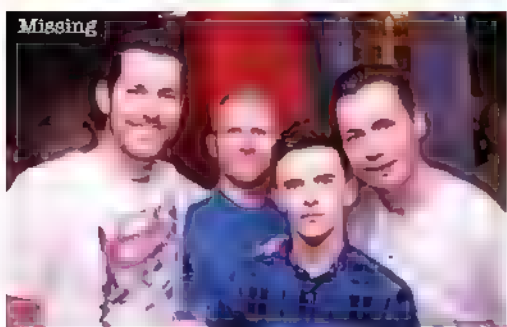
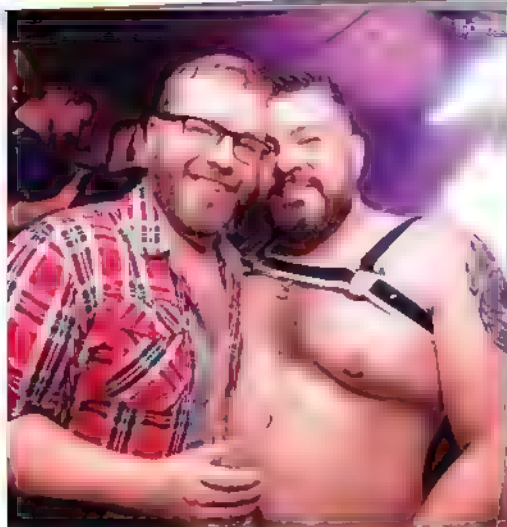
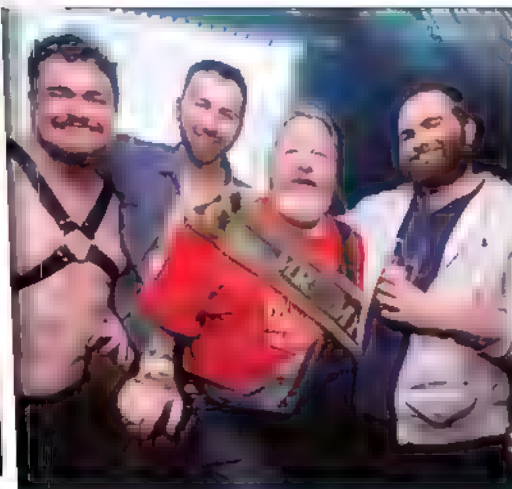
ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND

Birmingham Museums is an Arts Council Collection National Partner. Image: Angela Kelly, *Untitled (Women's Identity)*, 1975, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London. © Angela Kelly

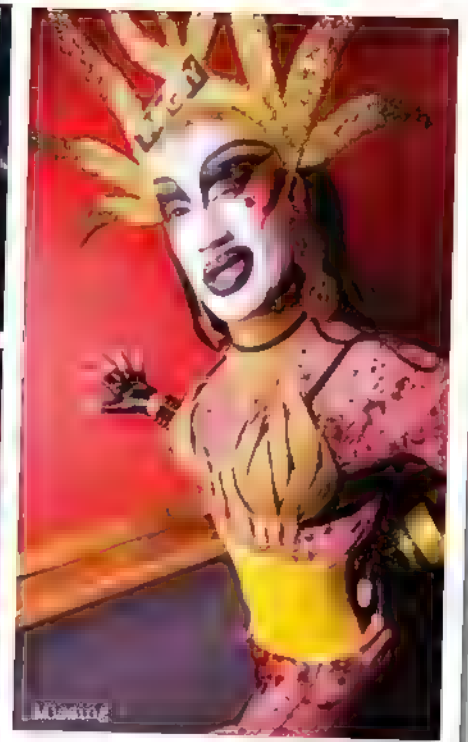
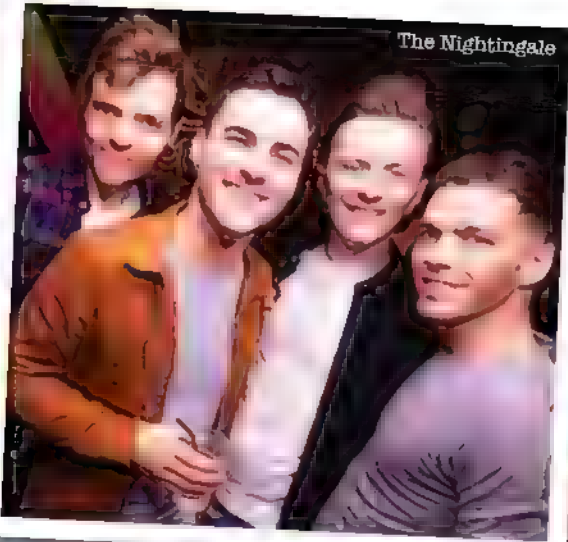
# Party all night in vibrant Birmingham







Party all night  
in vibrant  
Birmingham







# NOVEMBER

## CABARET



FRIDAY  
2ND  
MISS  
MARTY

FRIDAY  
9TH  
FANNIE  
COIL

FRIDAY  
16TH  
DRAG WITH  
NO NAME

FRIDAY  
23RD  
FANNY  
BURNS

FRIDAY  
30TH  
LADY  
MELINA



**LETITIA  
GEORGE**  
*Live on Stage*

SATURDAY  
3RD



## COVENTRY LGBT DOES STRICTLY

THE FIRST SAME SEX DANCING COMPETITION OUTSIDE OF LONDON  
BY COVENTRY DOES STRICTLY

SATURDAY 3RD

1ST  
DEC



# Snow Ball

STREET PARTY



**PLATNUM**

**KIERON RICHARDSON**

**MORE ACTS TBC**

**LIVE CABARET AND CHOIR**

**HUGE DANCE MARQUEE IN THE BULL YARD**

**OUTSIDE BARS, FIRE EATERS AND STILT WALKERS**



**Kwik Prick**

**Kwik Prick** is a free rapid HIV test for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities, and is available at Trade every Monday\* from 12 noon until 6pm.

**Kwik Prick:**

- Free and confidential
- Uses only a finger-prick blood sample
- Results within minutes
- 99.7% accurate
- May detect HIV exposure from as little as 4 weeks ago

**TRADE**

Drop-in service every Monday\*, 12 noon until 6pm.  
Appointments can be made for other days

Location: **Trade, 2nd Floor,  
27 Bowling Green Street, Leicester, LE1 6AS**  
For more information call us on 0116 254 1747  
or visit us at [www.tradesexualhealth.com](http://www.tradesexualhealth.com)

\*Kwik Prick is not available on Public Holidays  
Trade Charity Number 1081553

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health advice,  
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support for

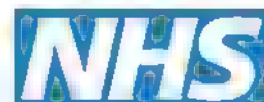
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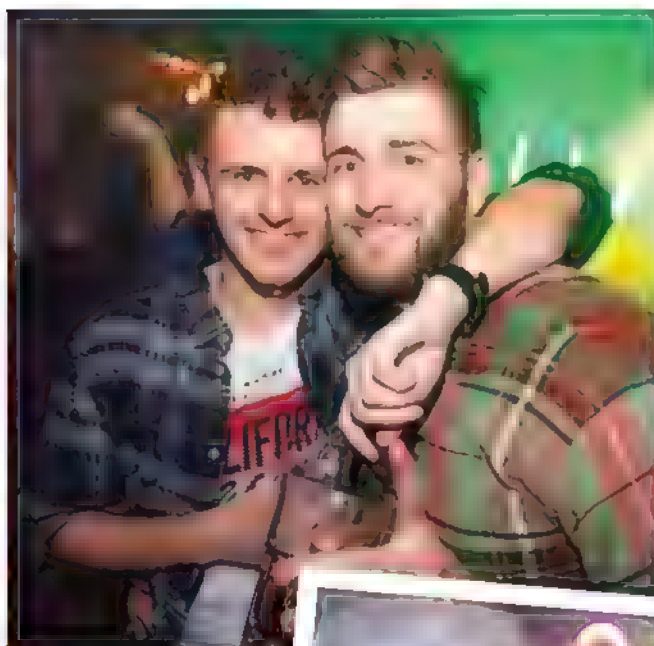
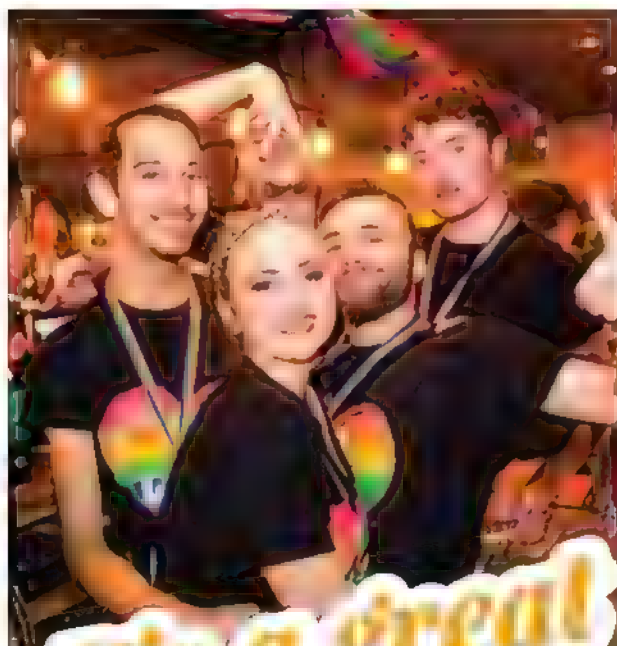
Leicester  
Sexual  
Health



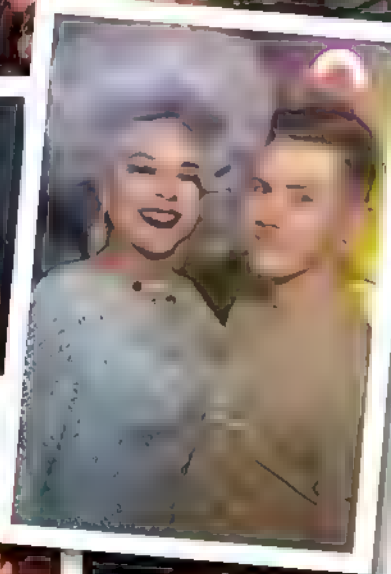
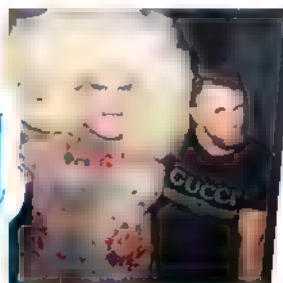
# No Stress. Just Test.

HIV testing week is 17 - 23 November 2018

Testing for HIV is **free** **quick** **confidential** <http://bit.ly/LLROTK>

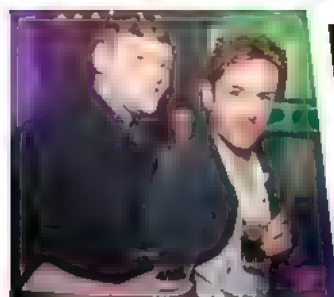
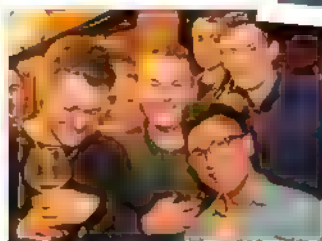


# It's a great night out at The Yard



**It's been another bumper month over at The Yard, Coventry's multiple award-winning gay bar and club. And there's a good reason...**

Each week the venue provides special guest cabaret, karaoke, amazing drinks offers and a whole lot more. So if you've not made it over there yet, what're you waiting for?!



Pictures by The Yard





**gorgeous**

THURSDAY 1-6AM | FRIDAY 3 | SATURDAY 11PM-6AM

2 BARS | VIP BOOTHS | VIP LOUNGE

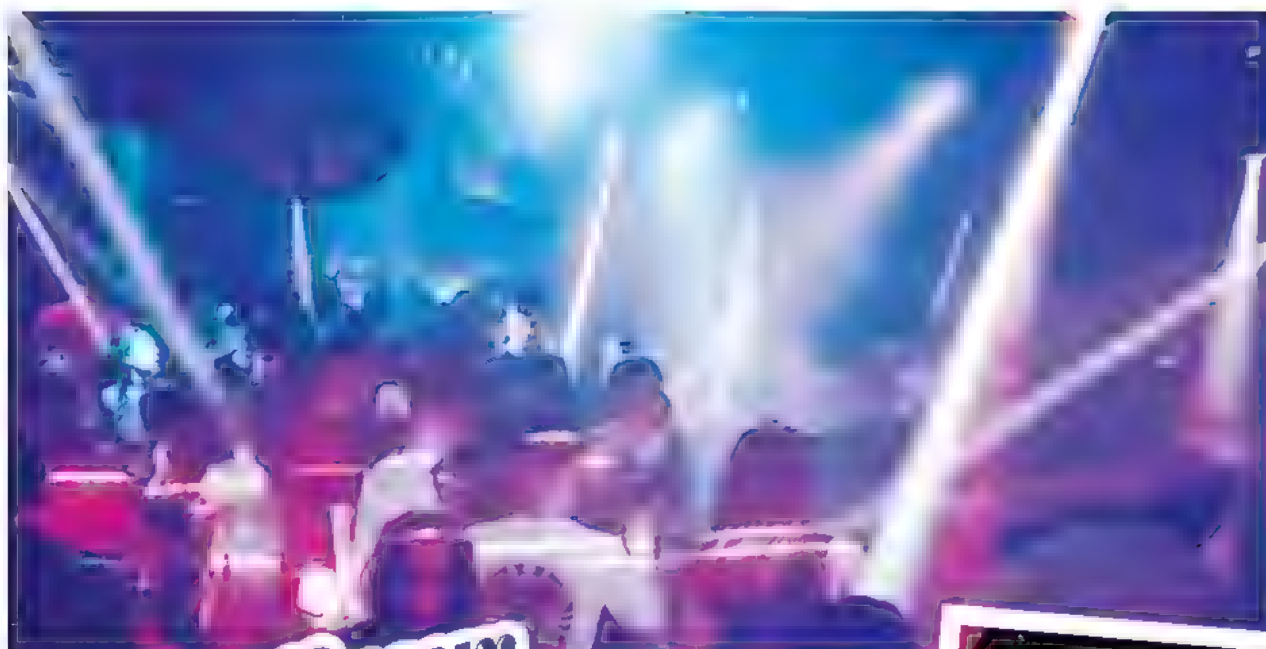
# KEEPING WOLVERHAMPTON OUT!

OFFICIALLY THE MIDLANDS BEST GAY NIGHTCLUB! (MIDLANDS ZONE AWARDS)

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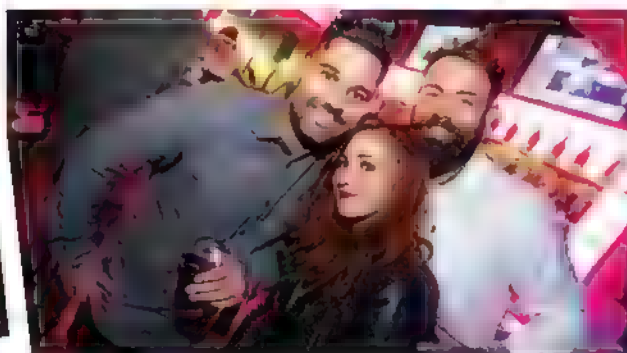
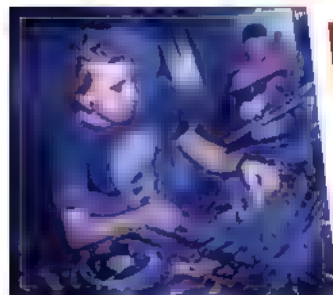
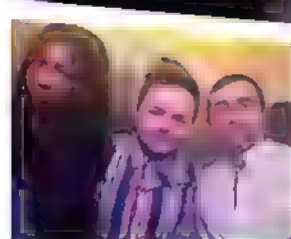
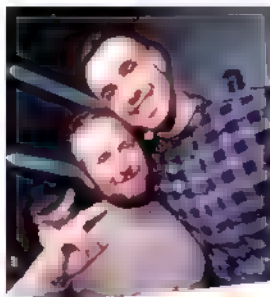


# Show off your Ego at **Gorgeous** Wolverhampton



**Every Saturday at Gorgeous in Wolverhampton, immerse yourself in Ego - one of the city's busiest club nights - from 11pm till 6am.**

The gay venue also offers 'the happiest two hours' in Wolverhampton, as you can get free entry, 50p Sourz shots, £1 spirits and £2 bottles between 11pm and 1am.



Pictures by Laura Byrne



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Further information available

[www.leicestersexualhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestersexualhealth.nhs.uk)

Free, private and confidential sexual health checks to gay & bisexual men, and men who have sex with men.



**Amigos Leisure**

Day: Thursdays  
Time: 3pm - 6pm (Last appointment 5:30pm)

Place: 30 Bedford Street South,  
Leicester LE1 3JR

**Splash Spa & Leisure**

Day: Tuesdays  
Time: 11am - 2pm (Last appointment 1:40pm)

Day: Thursdays  
Time: 3pm - 6pm (Last appointment 5:30pm)

Place: 61 Bedford Street Leicester LE1 3JR



You can also check out Trade  
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[www.tradesexualhealth.com](http://www.tradesexualhealth.com)

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**NEW GEAR**

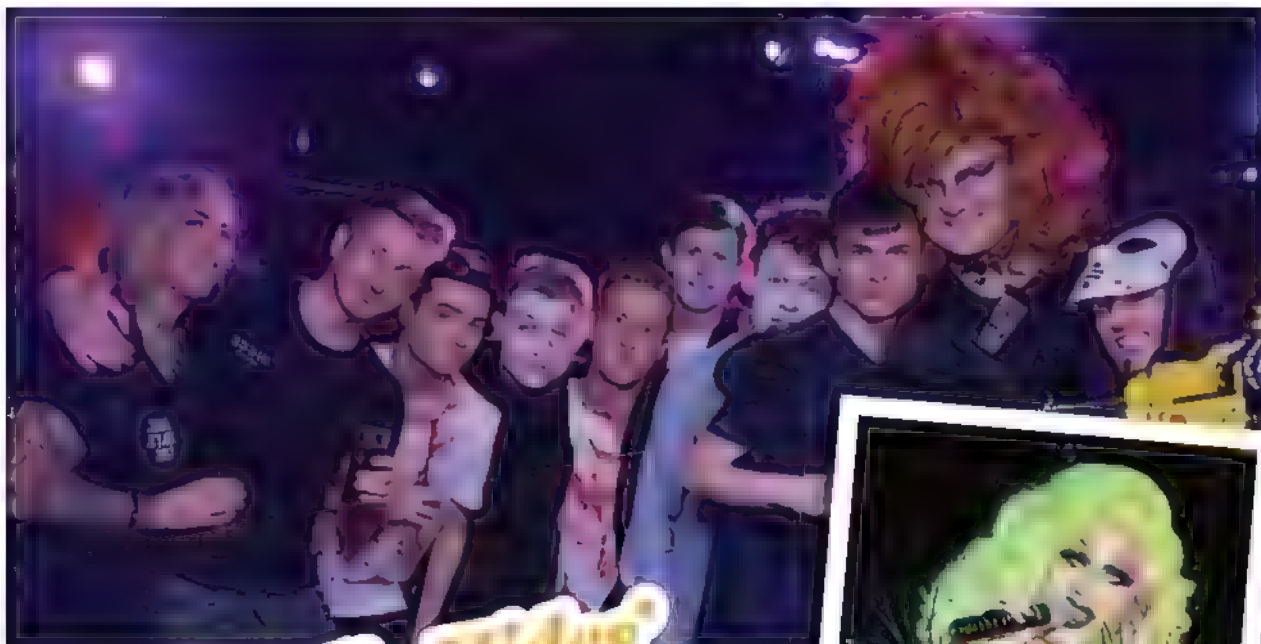
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AVAILABLE

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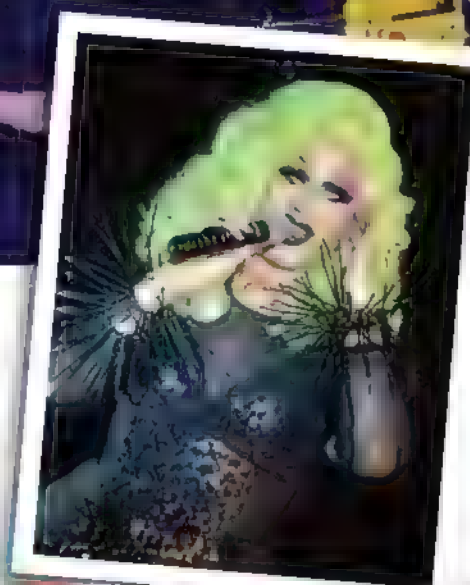
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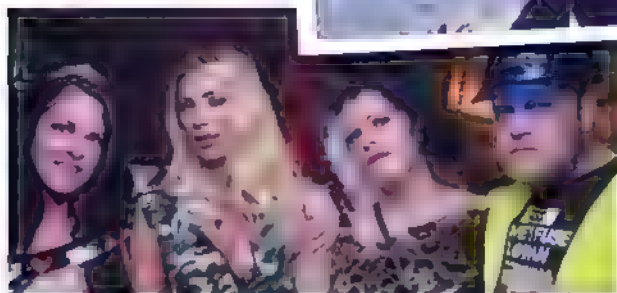
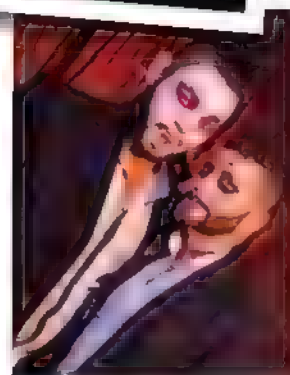
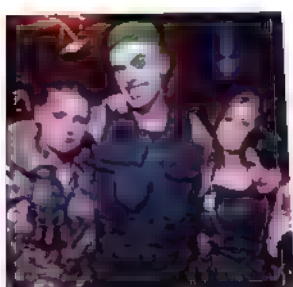


# Charlie Hides spooky spectacular at Bar Diva



**RuPaul's Drag Race star Charlie Hides was on hand to give Dudley's Bar Diva an extra special ghoulish Halloween last month!**

Punters turned out in high numbers for the scariest night of the year, enjoyed Charlie's fantastic show and really got their ghoul on. Well done, Dudley!



Pictures by Laura Byna



# GAY BARS & CLUBS IN THE MIDLANDS...



## BAR JESTER

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Tel: 0121 643 8344

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Tel: 0121 666 6888

## CLUB CHIC

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Tel: 0121 666 6806

## THE COME

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Tel: 0121 622 2797

## DEVILS KITCHEN

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## EDEN BAR

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Tel: 0121 622 1953  
www.theedenbar.co.uk  
f/eden.bar

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Tel: 0121 622 1452

## THE FOX

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Tel: 0121 622 3213

## GLAMOROUS

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Tel: 0121 622 5912

## THE LOFT

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www.thenightingaleclub.co.uk  
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### THE RED LION

Park St, WS1 1NW  
Tel: 01922 637790

## WOLVERHAMPTON

### PRINCE ALBERT

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Tel: 01902 540672

### BOHEMIAN

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f/gorgeousbar

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## **WIN!** Tickets to see **The Full Monty** in Birmingham!

If you're up for getting an eyeful of male flesh, then check out **The Full Monty** when it returns to the **Birmingham Hippodrome** stage early this month. And we've got **TWO TICKETS** for the show to give away to a lucky Zone reader!

Based on the hit 1997 comedy of the same name, **The Full Monty** follows the story of six unemployed men who form a male striptease act to earn some much-needed cash. Managing to be both humorous and poignant, this award winning musical touches on important social issues including sexuality, body

image and male mental health. Serious subject matter aside, audiences are guaranteed a fun-packed night out as Gary Lucy, James Redmond, Joe Gill, Louis Emerick, Kai Owen and Andrew Dunn drop their kegs and go **The Fully Monty**...

**The Full Monty** shows at **Birmingham Hippodrome** from **5 to 10 November**; **Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent**, **19 to 24 November**; **Nottingham Theatre Royal**, **4 to 9 February**; **Belgrade Theatre, Coventry**, **25 February to 6 March**, and **Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury**, **4 to 9 March**.



Enter the competition via our Facebook page at @midlandzone



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▽ Retro satin shirt £29.99 at [zara.com](http://zara.com)



▲ Orange velvet dinner jacket £90 at [next.co.uk](http://next.co.uk)





▼ Red sequin bow tie  
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▲ Navy derby shoe  
£100 at [dunelondon.com](http://dunelondon.com)



▲ Gold embroidered blazer  
£90 at [riverisland.com](http://riverisland.com)



▲ Faux suede western jacket  
£39.99 at [newlook.com](http://newlook.com)



▼ Navy check skinny suit £160 (Jacket £110, trousers £50) at [topman.com](http://topman.com)

▼ Blue camouflage krall shirt  
£320 at [viviennewestwood.com](http://viviennewestwood.com)

▼ Baroque tile print satin shirt  
£20 at [boohoo.com](http://boohoo.com)



▲ Black tinsel bow tie  
£12.50 at [topman.com](http://topman.com)





▲ J by Jasper Conran jumper  
£45 at [debenhams.com](http://debenhams.com)



▲ Bertie parason suede loafers  
£110 at [johnlewis.com](http://johnlewis.com)



▲ Burgundy floral jacket  
£75 at [burton.co.uk](http://burton.co.uk)

▼ Khaki suit (Jacket £79.99,  
trousers £39.99) at [zara.com](http://zara.com)



▲ Hugh Glitter silver loafers  
£89 at [kurtgeiger.com](http://kurtgeiger.com)



▲ Faux fur double-breasted  
jacket £95 at [topman.com](http://topman.com)



▲ Slim-fit black print cotton shirt  
£255 at [paulsmith.com](http://paulsmith.com)





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# THE LIFE OF A THIRTYSOMETHING GAY

the Stephen Spinks column

## “Just be”

There it was again. Like a short, sharp, uncomfortable slap across the face followed by a tight, hot grip, unrelenting and always unforgiving. It's like a hand slowly and mercilessly tightening around my throat. My breathing becomes fast and erratic. The harder I try to control it, the more it fights back. I'm sinking - and fast. I drop my head to hide my face, my cheeks turning a deep, dark red. Sweat beads across my forehead, and when it's really bad, it drips down my back. The heat my body throws off is somehow and inexplicably hotter than hell. I'm sinking. I often look around nervously, as acute paranoia sets in; I'm convinced everyone is looking at me. I'm sinking and I can't stop myself. I battle to keep a grip on reality but I'm losing. I want to run, I want to disappear. I want to be free. I've sunk and I'm deeply emotional about it, albeit I show no one. It takes me days to recover.

For as long as I can remember, I've been afflicted with deep-rooted social anxiety. I've barely spoken about it. I've never felt able to really share the deep entrenched pain of how this mental illness has affected every part of my life. It's an affliction that is both irrational and intensely debilitating. It can render my most confident self lost in an instant. It used to come on unannounced and for no real reason. It can corrupt my soul.

It was at its worst when I was a teenager. Walking to and from school became a form of torture. I was so self-conscious about how I thought, spoke and walked, I became stiff and awkward. I couldn't walk down the street without feeling like everyone was watching me. I struggled to walk along a road packed with oncoming traffic because I felt like I was being judged, and that I was somehow doing something wrong. I felt ugly and unworthy. I can still feel this from time to time now. I hated being asked questions in class because it meant I would have to address an often hostile audience; I was the clever kid in a rough school. I couldn't bear changing in the changing rooms for gym classes because I was the hairiest kid in the class. I hated being on show; I still do. I won a prestigious history award for my years

of hard work. Everyone was ecstatic; I was sickened. I knew I'd have to go up on stage in front of 200 people to collect it. I wanted to cry. It was the same for my graduation ceremony. I wanted to run, to disappear.

By my early 20s, it had almost got the better of me. I was so depressed, so introverted, so sick of feeling unworthy, that I knew I had a simple choice to make; to fight it or to give up entirely. The latter wasn't really an option. I just wanted to feel 'normal'; a normal that I imagined everyone else felt. So whenever I felt that tightening grip around my throat, the prickly heat rising up my body, I would pause, take a deep breath and slowly force myself to raise my head. It sounds so simple, yet it took everything I had to do it. I used to walk down the street pretending to talk to someone on my mobile phone as a way of making myself feel connected and in control. It seemed to give me confidence. But as I found strategies to deal with the immediate effect of anxiety, I realised I needed to go further. I couldn't spend my life talking to my phone every time I needed to walk through a crowd of people. By my late 20s, I was challenging myself to leave my phone at home and just walk. I stopped avoiding busy routes. Over the years, it worked. Two years ago, I moved back into the city.

I'm 37 now. The anxiety is still there, lurking in the shadows. But unlike before, it doesn't often have the better of me. Sure, it still arrives unannounced, but I know the signs, know my fight, and more importantly, know more often than not how to overcome my enemy.

These days, it's guaranteed to rock up when I have to meet new people. Turning up at a party, I feel like everyone is looking at me, wondering why I'm there because I clearly don't fit in. I worry I'm not chatty enough, clever enough or witty enough. I worry I'm not up on the latest music trends. I can't be bothered with gossip. In my head I don't have those great one-liners, or feel capable or willing to hold the attention of a room of people. I tell myself I don't care, but underneath I seemingly do. The intense

internal conversation I still have with myself either makes me over-talk in these situations or, worse still, shrink away to a quiet corner. I've always been a natural introvert, the bookish guy who always finds comfort with a small group of friends who I cherish and adore. Within this group I can be myself. I've self-selected. My anxiety never finds me here. I can be the centre of a party, the ideal host, the leader, the decision-maker, my confident and outgoing self. I can be me.

And yet... it has always amazed and confused me that despite how I feel and what I've battled with for decades, I'm always told by others I'm confident, highly capable and fearless in what I do. They are dumbfounded when I tell them I'm not. Apparently, I inspire. I can lead a team of 900 volunteers and 150 staff in my day job. I can have difficult and direct conversations that most people avoid like a plague. I have no qualms about speaking honestly and to the point in my workplace. Yet in my private life, my anxiety stalks me.

As the world has begun to open up and talk about mental illness, I hear more and more people talking about similar feelings. I never really thought that there were others out there who have, and are still battling with, the same affliction. Yet you don't need to reach out far to realise that so many of us feel the need to fit in, to conform, in order simply 'to be'. My older, wiser self has come to realise that fitting in is precisely the thing that drives my anxiety. It's imposter syndrome on super-charge.

Having the confidence to be yourself, to understand what your values are, what makes you tick, what you're really interested in - those are the things that ultimately define our character. Stray from these and we fail to stay true to our values, and so stoke the fire of our uncertainties. And it's in these moments - at least in my case - that anxiety comes out to play.

Once I understood this and accepted myself for who I am, my world became so much better, as I found, in the main, something of an inner peace.



## “Bah! Humbug!”

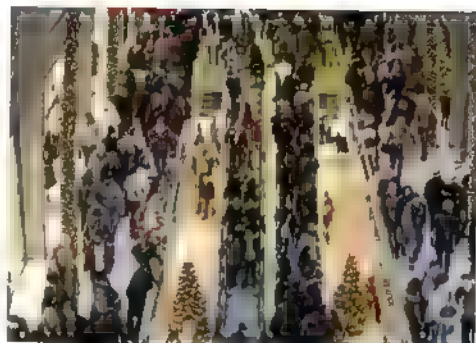
It's no coincidence that winter is known as a time of discontent, because that's pretty much all it dishes up. Bad weather, high bills, no daylight, flu, sleet, fog and cancelled trains. It's no wonder most people pick winter as the season in which to either die or divorce. The sparkles from the November fireworks last only a few seconds, and the only light at the end of the tunnel is a small bit of shine from endless strings of tinsel.

Which brings me onto the real downer of the season - Christmas shopping. I don't mind having a festive season per se. What goes on behind closed doors in the depths of December is really people's own business. But Christmas shopping impacts on the lives of everyone. Even those who are innocent of all things joyeux noel.

In the brief gap between one winter cold and the next, we get out to the shops to buy some essentials and find it's impossible to avoid the crowds of people buying anything and everything that can be wrapped in Christmas paper and

shoved under a dead pine tree. Which is basically anything smaller than a medium sized reindeer.

What irks me about this annual frenzy of festive retail activity is the assumption by all commercial establishments that we will spend any money at all on anything that has a picture of Santa on it or the slightest suggestion that Santa might be involved in some way. And that we will do this from the moment that the Easter eggs are taken off the shelves in the spring. The problem with being irked about this assumption, of course, is that millions of us will do exactly that. We spend millions of pounds (whether we actually have them or not) on making ourselves happy for just one day a year, we regret it through January and most of February (if the weather is bad), and we've completely forgotten how awful and pointless all that queuing and expenditure is by the time the first daffodils raise their cynical heads in the



spring

To add insult to injury, as I get older, the years are getting progressively shorter but the period for which all the Christmas goods are on the shelves is getting exponentially longer.

I fear there will soon be a time when Santa is living with me permanently, constantly demanding tinsel and leftover stuffing.

Bah! Humbug!

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## ON THE BALL

with  
Steve Ball

### Safety first

A few weeks ago, I had one of those experiences you think will never happen to you. I'd been to see Kylie Minogue with my husband and daughter and then joined other friends at a Kylie after-party in Birmingham's Gay Village. We all had a great night, and I then walked my daughter home to her new university accommodation in the city centre.

No sooner had I seen her through the security gate than two guys tried to engage me in a conversation about mobile phone credit. I brushed them off and carried on walking, only to be pounced on a few seconds later. They demanded my phone, and when I refused, produced handguns and threatened to kill me unless I emptied

my pockets and my bank account at the ATM round the corner.

It was one of those life-flashing-before-your-eyes moments that you see in films and hear about happening to other people. Thanks to the swift actions of university security guards, who'd seen the whole episode play out on CCTV, I wasn't badly hurt and they escaped with just my phone and wallet.

It could have been so much worse, but it was a salutary reminder to all of us who go out late at night - whether in large city centres or small

villages - that any person walking alone, male or female, is potential prey for assault. It's good to know that street crime has fallen and Birmingham is much safer than other UK cities of a similar size, but we do all need to think about our own personal safety. The incident won't stop me going out at night, but it will make me more vigilant and aware of the risks. And I have a new strategy for deterring potential attackers - singing Kylie's greatest hits at the top of my voice. If that doesn't stop them, nothing will!



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# THE VIRAL ROUND-UP

Here's what we've been looking at online...

We all do it - spend hours on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Often we're distracted from what we should be doing by cat videos and funny pranks - or by something feelgood that's been shared so much on the net it's officially classed as 'viral'. Well, here are some of Midlands Zone's favourites from the past month!

## Cher finally explains some of her most infamous tweets...

Cher's Twitter is the stuff that endless memes are made of. Her tweets are instantly quotable, very absurd and always undeniably on-brand. So she's a natural fit for Twitter's Behind The Tweets series - which gets some of the biggest stars in the business to offer more context about their most viral tweets.



From joking that she'd marked the birthday of long-time rival Madonna by getting a colonic, to revealing that her "overwhelmed" iPad had frozen after being touched by a "fabulous diva", Cher explains exactly what was going through her mind when she pressed 'send'. As it turns out, sometimes she's as clueless as the rest of us...

To watch Cher's #BehindTheTweets, check out Twitter Music's account @TwitterMusic

## CELEB SNAPS!

Our fave Insta pics from this month...



Aquaria bares all... (@ageofaquaria)



Little Mix are back - and fierce as ever... (@littlemix)



Mariah Carey is giving us life on the cover of her new album, Caution... (@mariahcarey)



## The Dark Lord takes on Dangerous Woman

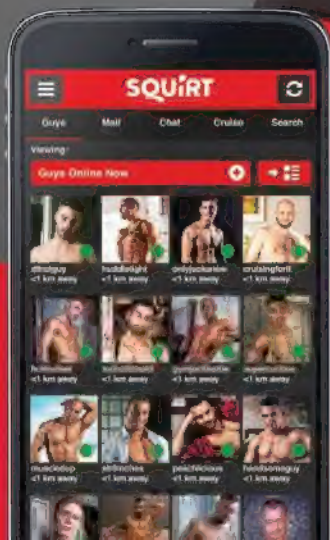
When nightlife entertainer and drag performer Florida Man attended an Ariana Grande tribute night, he brought out Lady Voldemort to give the crowd a truly dangerous performance.

Complete with the Dark Lord's snake-like nose and black robes, Lady Voldemort wowed the appreciative audience with a rendition of Dangerous Woman.

There's dancing, teasing, shimmies and fishnet stockings - oh, and a duel (and a bit of a snog) with a shirtless Harry Potter, so you know it's a good one. You can check out Lady Voldemort's performance at [youtu.be/yVFULwWFFb0](https://youtu.be/yVFULwWFFb0)



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